The Hudson Review

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR: *Frederick Morgan*
EDITORS: *William Arrowsmith, Joseph Bennett*
MANAGING EDITOR: *Lisa Dyer*

VOLUME IX, NUMBER 4 WINTER 1956-57

Three Poems	WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS	485
The Flight into Egypt *(verse)*	CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON	487
The Great Grasp of Unreason	R. P. BLACKMUR	488
Four Poems	GEORGE P. ELLIOTT	504
Poems and Translations	W. S. MERWIN	509
Four Poems	CHARLES TOMLINSON	513
Justice to *Pamela*	B. L. REID	516
Father Sebastien Rale, S.J. *(verse)*	WILLIAM GOODREAU	534
Maria Gardner *(story)*	RICHARD CLAY	541
Dante's Canzone I *(translation)*	IRMA BRANDEIS	567
Two Poems	RUTH FAINLIGHT	568
The Double *(verse)*	WILLIAM ALFRED	569
Pound, *Haiku* and the Image	EARL MINER	570
The New Upper-Middle Soap Opera	HERBERT GOLD	585
New Lines in English Poetry	JOHN HOLLOWAY	592

Reviews:

Hwaet, We Holbytla . . .	DOUGLASS PARKER	598
Polynesia and Manhattan in Melville's Art	MARIUS BEWLEY	609
Joyce and His Critics	ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS	617
Seven Novels	DANIEL AARON	622
"Kiss the Hand You Cannot Sever"	VERNON YOUNG	628
"How But in Custom and in Ceremony"	WILLIAM MEREDITH	633
Communications		636
Index to Volume IX		637

THE HUDSON REVIEW is published quarterly by The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th St., New York 22, N. Y. Copyright 1957 by The Hudson Review, Inc. Registered U. S. Patent Office. Second-class mailing privilege authorized at Princeton, New Jersey. Indexed in The International Index.

Reprinted With Permission of the Original Publisher
AMS REPRINT COMPANY, New York 3, New York

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Critics' Choice

John Skolle

AZALAÏ

"Fascinating . . . a vivid and detailed account of how a five-hundred camel caravan operates, as well as a portrait of the desert nomad. Highly recommended."–*The New Yorker*. With maps and 35 exciting photographs. $4.00

William Eastlake

GO IN BEAUTY

"This witty and exhilarating novel displays some remarkable powers . . . The locale is marvelously evoked –Navajo Indian country in New Mexico. The people are as vivid as the places. . . . The central story . . . is moving emotionally and it also moves the mind."–*N.Y. Times Book Review*. $3.50

At all bookstores

HARPER & BROTHERS
New York 16

Distinguished Titles from the World's Largest Collection of Great Books

Everyman's Library

EACH $1.65

The 1000th Volume

Aristotle's Metaphysics

edited and translated by John Warrington. Introduction by Sir David Ross, former President of the Aristotelian Society. In this unique edition, the fourteen books of the text have been rearranged to give a more logical sequence to the exposition. "Certainly the most accurate and usable text of the *Metaphysics* now available."—John Wild, Harvard University. #1000.

The Betrothed

by Alessandro Manzoni. The magnificent Italian historical novel translated by Archibald Colquhoun. #999.

Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays

new revised and enlarged edition prepared by A. C. Cawley. #381.

Milton's Poems

edited and introduced by Prof. B. A. Wright, University of Southampton. New edition based on Milton's own editions and manuscripts. #384.

E. P. DUTTON & CO.
300 Fourth Avenue New York 10, N.Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

The Gift

As the wise men of old brought gifts
guided by a star
to the humble birthplace
of the god of love,
the devils
as an old print shows
retreated in confusion.
What could a baby know
of gold ornaments
or frankincense and myrrh,
of priestly robes
and devout genuflections?
But the imagination
knows all stories
before they are told
and knows the truth of this one
past all defection.

The rich gifts
so unsuitable for a child
though devoutly proffered,
stood for all that love can bring.
The men were old
how could they know
of a mother's needs
or a child's
appetite?

But as they kneeled
the child was fed.
They saw it
and
gave praise!
A miracle

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had taken place,
hard gold to love,
a mother's milk!
before
their wondering eyes.

The ass brayed
the cattle lowed.
It was their nature.
All men by their nature give praise.
It is all
they can do.
The very devils
by their flight give praise.
What is death,
beside this?
Nothing. The wise men
came with gifts
and bowed down
to worship
that perfection.

Calypso

We watched
a red rooster
with

two hens
back
of the museum

at
St. Croix
flap his

wings
zippe zappe
and crow

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Title

—as in Gauguin's, The Loss of Virginity—
how inessential it is to the composition:
the nude body, unattended save by a watchful
hound, forepaw against the naked breasts,
where she lies on her back in an open field,
limbs quietly assembled—yet how by its
very unrelatedness it enhances the impact
and emotional dignity of the whole . .

CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON

The Flight into Egypt

They saw them pass, the old man limping, the donkey,
The hooded woman, riding sidesaddle,
And the bundle she held as if it were valuable.
They heard the beast sigh, for sand scattering
Rose under wind as vision under an eyelid;
And the four went veiled
Into the dark which swallowed them up in Egypt.

Who had seen this could understand
Neither the woman's diligence, nor the reason
Of the false dawns flickering behind them;
How in the old man's face all Egypt lay reflected;
Nor could they see through the enfolding cloth
How wide looked up the pearl eyes of the flying god.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

R. P. BLACKMUR

The Great Grasp of Unreason

dikaiôn adikous phrenas: the unjust minds of the just

IT IS ALWAYS a help to speak from a text, and it seems even necessary—in looking at 20th century literature, so huge and amorphous a mass it is—to use two, or even three texts in order to limit our approach to the literature and to suggest a governing theme in our response to it. With our texts in mind, we can then set about further limitations—I will not say screening or testing—as to what examples of the literature we can best use to illustrate the theme. Other texts would suggest other themes and other limitations in example, and I expect our own would be much modified in their presence. I hope our own will be interesting enough to complement the order and significance of what lurks in the minds of others—or indeed in your own. This is, I think, an application in the field of literary criticism of the principle of indeterminacy, the principle of complimentary variable relations; but I do not look for so much advantage from it here in criticism as it has shown in physics and mathematics. I hope only that the principle will seem vivid with possibility. Indeterminacy is life.

Here are my texts, and as it does not matter in what order they come, the most familiar shall be first. It is from *King Lear* and is an aside interjected by Edgar into a long speech by Lear to serve as dramatic punctuation—like a rest in music—while the King is gathering breath in the long late rush of his being.

> *O! Matter and impertinency mix'd;*
> *Reason in madness.*

It is a curious thing that we might not ourselves see any madness in Lear's words were it not for Edgar's aside. We might rather see the poetic mind at its ancient task of coping with, responding to, and acknowledging all the irrational horror and injustice and disorder of human behaviour. We would see reason at work: we would see what Sophocles calls in the *Antigone*, the unjust minds of the just. Still, it is reason in madness. The scholar who edits my copy of *King Lear* (Kenneth Muir, Arden Edition, London,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1952, p. lx) complains of another scholar (Schücking) with regard to our text that he "seems to be only partly aware of the paradox that Lear when ostensibly sane cannot distinguish between Cordelia and her wicked sisters: he acquires wisdom by going mad, and his wildest speeches are a mixture of matter and impertinency—'reason in madness.'" I would complain against both my scholars only this far, and chiefly in the interests of looking at the literature of our own times—of which, of course, we want to make *King Lear* a part. Was it not by releasing himself from the bonds of both institutional and personal reason that Lear renewed in himself the task of reason? Reason is in substance all the living memory of the mind; in action (or, if you like, in essence) reason is the recognition and creation of order where disorder was. It is Edgar's aside that sees that this is what Lear was doing. Reason in madness.

Our second text is only less familiar than the first, and is like unto it because it enlightens it in terms of our own interest by setting us in our own time—or in a kind of minus version of our own time where we see where we are not as well as where we are. This is from part five of Eliot's "East Coker" Quartet:

So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years—
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of l'entre deux guerres—
Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure
Because one has only learnt to get the letter of words
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
With shabby equipment always deteriorating
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,
Undisciplined squads of emotion. And what there is to conquer
By strength and submission, has already been discovered
Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope
To emulate—but there is no competition—
There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.
For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.

This is Eliot mixing, like Lear in Edgar's ears, matter and impertinence, and finding reason in the madness that grasps him all

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about. This the very last lines of the poem make plain in the way that the flushing movement of breath makes plain there is life.

> *Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,*
> *The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters*
> *Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning.*

In the long part of these quotations Eliot generalizes the pursuit of reason in madness; in the last lines—where he puts together the incarnation of reason and the beautiful and dreadful, partial and always changing incarnation of behaviour, the petrel and the porpoise—he exemplifies it. Matter and impertinence.

The third text has a kind of official familiarity, which we would redeem out of natural piety and because it both generalizes and exemplifies our theme; thus it needs to be quoted in two English versions. Here is a version of 1951 of *Antigone* 610-614. "Through the future and distant time to come, as through the past, this law will prevail, working not without calamity for the lives of men throughout this citied world." (Goheen, *The Imagery of Sophocles' Antigone*, Princeton, 1951.) The earlier version of Jebb and Pearson gives for the sense of the last phrase: "Nothing that is vast enters the life of men without a curse" (cited *idem*, p. 143). Jebb died in 1905 and his version reflects Victorian predilections about fate and says nothing about the *hyperbasia* or transgression, and therefore involvement by man in his fate which is present in the later version. This is one of the differences between the age before 1914 and our own; if our age does not understand the difference, our writers have understood it very well. Human behaviour has gotten conspicuously into the second version in much the same way it had gotten into *King Lear* and *The Four Quartets*. It is the unreason of behaviour grasps reason to the quick: reason in madness.

So much for our three texts. I should like to think that the Ode from the *Antigone* sang the praises—the precious belief—of the literature of our own citied world.

II

The great advantage of these texts is that they come after the literature they are intended to illuminate and yet also link them to the past, and they both illuminate and link by their power as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

images set side by side with our literature and our lives. A later time will perhaps want different texts and will see a different literature from the point of view of a different mind—which will make a judgment more nearly right from their point of view but could not correct what we see and what we respond to; we can only look at what is in front of us with the aid of our own sense of the past and with our own lives towards a particular future. Who knows, it may be the next age may not express itself in words (in the sense that words are poetry, that art is poetry) at all, for the next age may not be literate in any sense we understand or that the last three thousand years would have understood. Poetry may yet become an even more secret craft than it was during the dream of the dark ages; and indeed there is a promise of this in the very struggle towards difficulty our poetry shows, and in the very refusal it makes to come to terms with the leading features of the actual mind of the society which confronts it. This is the struggle between the old literacy and the new illiteracy, which is not ignorance but fragmented and specialized knowledge.

Toynbee has a passage of reason and madness in his *Study of History* which bears on this. "The bread of Universal Education is no sooner cast upon the waters of social life than a shoal of sharks rises from the depths and devours the children's bread under the philanthropists' eyes. In the educational history of England for example, the dates speak for themselves. Universal compulsory gratuitous education was inaugurated in this country in A.D. 1870; the Yellow Press was invented some twenty years later—as soon as the first generation of children from the national schools had come into the labour market and acquired some purchasing power—by a stroke of irresponsible genius which had divined that the educational philanthropists' labour of love could be made to yield the newspaper king a royal profit."

The effects of free education and the Yellow Press in our field—at any rate their concomitants—were Art for Art's sake and the *Yellow Book* and the long series of increasingly intransigent declarations of independence on the part of the arts which have lasted, with diminishing intellectual force, and an increasing lack of that coherence of images which we call verisimilitude, even after the second world war. But Toynbee has something else to say about another aspect of our society, which perhaps explains the relaxa-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion of our educational policy, and which is also pertinent to our poetry.

"Our Western scientific knowledge of which we boast, and even our Western technique for turning this knowledge to practical account—a technique upon which we depend for our wealth and strength—is perilously esoteric. The great new social forces of Democracy and Industrialism, which our Western Civilization has thrown up in the course of its growth, have been evoked from the depths by a tiny creative minority. Even this minority is wondering today whether it will be able to control and guide much longer these forces which it has let loose. . . . And the main reason why this would be Western Salt of the Earth is in fear, today, of losing its savour is because the great mass of the Western body social has remained unsalted. . . . In the latter-day perversion of our Western Press, we see the 'drive' of Western Industrialism and Democracy being employed to keep the mass of Western Humanity culturally depressed at, or perhaps even below, its pre-industrial and pre-democratic spiritual level; and the same new 'drive' has been put, with similar evil consequences, into the old institutions of War and Tribalism and Slavery and Property." [III, 241]

First, I would remind you that this passage, like the other, was written in the thirties at the safest possible distance between the two wars, and has in no wise lost its applicability. Second, so that it may apply the more closely, I would suggest that we substitute the word "poetic" for the word "scientific" in the first sentence quoted above. "Our Western *poetic* knowledge of which we boast, and even our whole Western *poetic* technique for turning this knowledge to practical account . . . is perilously esoteric." Does it not read well enough for Toynbee, and, to the present purpose, much better for ourselves? For we have not only an enormous increase in potential or required audience but also a diminution, relatively if not absolutely, in the means of reaching, let alone controlling, that audience. So put, we see at once how the new knowledges, so managed, so esoteric, have been reflected in the habit and superficial character of poetry and the poet himself. He has found himself speaking a private language and has grown proud of it.

What else could the writer do but invent a vital dogma of self-sufficiency?—and I do not say he was not right in doing so. Faced

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the dissolution of thought and the isolation of the artist, faced with the new industrialization of intellect, what else could he do but declare his independence and self-sufficient supremacy both as intellectual and as artist? Let us admit the new independence came partly out of the old claims for and defenses of poetry from Aristotle through Shelley, partly from the 19th century claims made by Ruskin and Arnold, all of which allied art deeply to society, but partly—and this is the biggest emotional part—from the blow of the first world war and what seemed the alienation of the artist from a society increasingly less aesthetically-minded—less interested in the vivid apprehension of the values of the individual. It is when you have lost, or think you are about to lose, the objective recognition of your values, that you assert them most violently and in their most extreme form—as every unrequited lover knows. You either go into the desert, kill yourself, pull your shell over your head, or set up in a new business: in any case, whether lover or artist, being as conspicuous as possible about it. To be either a dandy or dirty, and especially where out of keeping, is always a good rôle; and to be an anchorite or an oracle combines the advantages of both. You are in any case among enemies.

A Russian socialist, Georgi Plekhanov, thought this sort of attitude developed when artists feel a "hopeless contradiction between their aims and the aims of the society to which they belong. Artists must be very hostile to their society and they must see no hope of changing it." But let us put it one more way—as near neutral as possible. It has always been difficult to pay for art out of the running expenses of any form of society, and it has become unusually difficult under finance-capitalism (or any current money-based form of democracy) to find a means to go beyond the economy or find a special privy-purse. Also, it has always been difficult to find a sure or satisfactory audience for the living artist; and this has become increasingly difficult in societies like our own where education has become both universal and largely technical—at any rate less generalizably literate—and which has at the same time enormously multiplied the number of artists. So, too, it has always been difficult for the artist to find the means of expressing his own direct apprehension of life in conventions which were, or could be made, part of the conventions of society in general; and this,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

also—this problem of communication—has become excessively difficult in a society which tends to reject the kind of faithful conventions under which the artist has usually worked, and a society in which, under the urban process, and under the weight of the new knowledges, so much of thought has been given over to mechanism which had formerly operated under faith. These are the conditions under which the artist has felt, in his exaggeration of them, isolated and has asserted himself under the general state of mind that runs from art for art's sake through surrealism to Existenz—It is no wonder. Yet it was Coleridge who, as reported in *Table Talk*, put the matter most succinctly—There were, he said, three silent Revolutions in the history of England: "When the professions fell off from the Church; when literature fell off from the professions; and when the press fell off from literature."—I will not say what the fourth silent revolution is: it is ours, and now going on.

But if we cannot name the fourth revolution we can discern some of its features in a sketch of some of the materials that go to make up our immediate intellectual history. We can touch on some of the conditions and forces of our minds. We can look into our fictions to see what gave them idiom. Idiom is the twist of truth, the twist, like that of the strands of a rope, which keeps its component fictions together. History is old and twisted beyond our reach in time. But the sense of moving background which we call history began to grow with Gibbon and we began to feel it imperative in the last ninety years—or since the war of 1870. We now take into account the extremes of several forms of time as part of our history which had not got much into history before that date—time outside the chronicle and the chronometer alike. We have time in anthropology, ethnology, mythology, psychology, physics and mathematics and as a response to these times we have changed our heroes.

Politics began to pretend a century and a half ago that the good society had no hero but itself, and did so on the conviction that the old heroes were malevolent. As the old Chinese believed, a great man was a national calamity. About 1870 two opposed heroic shapes were thrown up by society: the artist as hero and the heroic proletariat. Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin came to represent the hero (by dictatorship) of the scum of the earth. The scum on the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pond is the reimagined primeval slime, and we are nothing if we are not primeval. In psychoanalysis we regurgitate the scum, only to discover it inexhaustible. Taboos become totems. St. Francis of Assisi becomes Vicar of our scummiest behaviour. Society takes on the aspect of uniform motion. The artist is the hero who struggles against uniform motion, a struggle in marmalade.

For the artist regards uniform motion as the last torpor of life. Torpor is the spread of momentum, but we prefer to believe it is the running down of things. For three generations we have heroized the second law of thermodynamics, which is the law of the dissipation or gradual unavailability of energy within any system,—which is the law of entropy or the incapacity for fresh idiom, time and perception going backwards. Entropy, from the point of view of the rational imagination, is disorder and is indeed its field. Actually, we have been as busy, as violent, and as concentrated as the ant-heap. We are torpid only because we are glutted with energy and feel it only as trouble. The strains are out of phase with each other and we have techniques only for the troubles.

If we say this sort of thing as example—and we could say so much more—are we not the first age which is self-conscious of its own fictions; and hence the first age of true pyrrhonism: doubting the value as well as the fact? We believe only in the techniques of manipulating and counting. Not in choice, not in the imperative, chiefly in opinion. Thus we believe in the analysis of conduct as a means of discounting behaviour, in the drum-majorette of 14 as a means of showing sex as force without having to take account of it.

Our age is full of great hymns to the puerile, what in medicine and art are called images of fundamental frustration. If you look in the Oxford dictionary, all the early meanings of frustration were positive. You frustrated villainy, which was desirable. Now we frustrate our own good, and we lend Hamlet our own frustrations. In the history of the word there is part of the history of our Psyche. When we recognize frustration as a *fundamental* condition of life, it ought no longer to be frustration, but fate, tragedy, damnation, the Cross, the other side of every infatuation. But we would not think we expressed ourselves if we said so.

Here one does not exactly ask if we are to have a deliberate resurrection of the dark ages, one only looks in the closet and under the bed and remembers how Freud said our dreams make

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it possible for us to sleep. If the dark ages had had a mind it would have been both cyclical and on sale to the devil. We migrate from one to the other, from hope without longing to longing without hope, and on the whole we prefer instruments to speculation, method to madness, as if we would obliterate the *daring* part of consciousness, which looks into the glass to see. We prefer, even in our art, poetry, and religion, confused alarms on lonely shores.

It is considerations like these which make us reflect that there may actually be a new phase of culture at hand: mass culture. But it may be only that too much of our research leads us into the mass-part of man's soul: into the anonymous and communal saga in which the actions of the individual are construed as sinister and somehow less than his own. Thus the super-man or hero tends to be either the mass-man or the arch-criminal or the pure heel. It is the glory of James Joyce that in the figures of Bloom and H. C. Earwicker he worked against all these in a valiant attempt to create a new kingdom of man: an independent, individual morality against the society that made it necessary. Yet he deflected the common mode of research very little. He was a proper author and redeemed the validity of experience in the theorems he called his art. Besides Joyce, there are the others, to whom we shall come if we hold out.

What holds us, what keeps us, what moves us, must be a combination of our under-momentum and our bourgeois humanism. These are the correctives as they are the aching sources, the true enliveners, of our great men. Bourgeois humanism (the treasure of residual reason in live relation to the madness of the senses) is the only conscious art of the mind designed to deal with our megapolitan mass society: it alone knows what to *do with* momentum in its new guise; and it alone knows it must be more than itself without losing itself in order to succeed.

The decay of the prestige of bourgeois humanism was perhaps necessary, but only as an interim, a condition of interregnum, when new forces overran us. In order to restore the humanism we have to overcome the forces. We have to take stock, too, of the multiplication in the number of the artists and to remember their insistent disrelatedness. It was never to have been expected that society—especially a centralized state like our own—would be willing to pay for the cost of the artists who as a class, and often

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

individually, raised the severest problems of that society: images of the deep anarchies out of which the order of the state must be remade if that order is to be vital. But it ought to have been expected that the incentive of the artists themselves should have remained fixed on that living relation between anarchy and order. Instead, we have the apparition of the arts asserting their authority in a combination of the spontaneous and the arbitrary, in pure poetry and pure expression and pure trouble. Instead of creation in honesty, we have assertion in desperation; we have a fanaticism of the accidental instead of a growth of will. The true anarchy of spirit should always show (or always *has* showed) a tory flavor. It is the artist above all who *realizes* that revolutions—however fresh, violent and destructive, however aspiring, or groping, or contagious—have always *already* taken place; as private murder represents a relation already at crisis or already sundered. Revolution and murder are only the gross cost, assessed too late: the usury of dead institutions.

The anarchy of our artists is in response to facts as well as in evasion of facts. The two great external facts of our time are the explosion of populations and the explosions of the new energies. The two great internal facts of our time are the recreation of the devil (or pure behaviour) in a place of authority and the development of techniques for finding destructive troubles in the psyche of individuals. With neither of these pairs of facts, without a vital order in society, can the individual keep up except as corrosion may be said to keep up with the salts that cause it—to the point of incoherence in purpose and collapse of structure. The two pairs of facts are I think related. The devil and the techniques are the slow form of population and energy explosions. But if we let this relation transpire in the mind we see we have the power to cope with the facts themselves; for we then behold the nature of our troubles in what used to be called the unity of apperception. To say this is to involve bourgeois humanism once again. It may not be the right force, or the right muse, but they are the only ones we know, and the only ones which we know have within themselves the capacity to generate self-change by absorbing disorder into order. We can remember in the past it was the artists who taught society this skill.

The latter end of our time—1920-1950—is an age of critique:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

critique as a means of criticism and critique as a means of creation. Critique as criticism we see in the expanding omnivorous techniques for the examination of poetry. Critique as creation we see in Proust, Mann, Joyce, and Kafka. Critique is the wiggling extreme articulation of vital elements into an order of vision: especially the elements of the new powers and the new troubles.

With critique as creation we shall have much to do. Here I want a passing emphasis on criticism in its widest sense. Some of the criticism merely extends along new lines the malicious criticism of knowledge (the attack on the validity of perception) which is the net practical result of the current of philosophy beginning with Berkeley and running into the sands of the Existentialists. Epistemology was taught to prevent knowledge or at least to gravel it with doubts; so most criticism of poetry. All the apprehensive powers of the mind have been put at such a discount that they are felt to be irrational, when actually they are the fountainhead and fountain reach of reason herself. It strikes me here that in result upon our general mind, modern physics and mathematics make a parallel extension of the same malicious criticism of knowledge: as refinement of critical abstraction, good for manipulation, rotten for apprehension,—that is, for the sensual knowledge that is the immediate rock of physics and the thing indexed by mathematics. As compared to literary criticism, the critique supplied by physics is both more malice and more knowledge and is also more remote from the apprehending reason. The effect of these malicious critiques is profound: almost they dissolve our sense of the texture of moral experience. It is the writhing of actual knowledge under these malicious techniques that makes choice and purpose and taste so difficult, uncertain, and fractious. We tend to relapse from all human creation back into almost pure momentum (in analogy to pure sensation), with all our activity becoming mere sports on the movement of inertia. Thus it is we seem to manipulate for manipulation's sake and find the *acte gratuit* a liberation when it ought to be a warning, an explosion when it ought to be a play, a gesture, a feint. It is thus that we *become* our problem when we ought to exemplify some effort at the solution of it. We become, in Dante's language, the War of the Journey without active knowledge of the War of the Pity. It is the two Wars that need the Muses; either, taken solely, puerilizes man.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The malicious criticism of knowledge is reflected also in the unmoored diabolism that makes so many mansions in the modern sensibility, and makes them uninhabitable sink-holes of terror and dismay, full of the uncleanly and aborted approximations of the unseemly. Hysteria, which ought to be the clue to reality, becomes its creator. This we see in Freud, who began his studies with the aetiology of hysteria and proceeded with its deification: as if all the gross responses unconformable with conduct could ordain conduct. The sequence is interesting: hypnotism, psychical research, hysteria, neurosis, psychosis, psychoanalysis. The very title, *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, is itself a lie, told that we might mistake the conditions of our struggle for its object; in short, a malicious criticism of knowledge. It is a queer thing that we should desire to make experience itself suicidal to its own impulses: queer but actual. The devil always takes the form of the actual, most conspicuously in an expressionistic age. But only the bourgeois humanist would know this.

But it must be the bourgeois humanist in his rôle as artist, who knows and therefore is near the expressionism of our times, the artist thrown up as an heroic type and an heroic image. And indeed it has been that class which has known most, or expressed the most—especially in that explosion of talent that took place in the twenties, crystallizing between 1922 and 1925 as in *Ulysses, The Wasteland, The Magic Mountain, The Tower, The Counterfeiters*, and a great deal more. It is to a version of the general *artistic* problem which gave condition to this explosion that I have been leading up to. All these books came deeply from the bourgeois humanistic tradition and come as near masterpieces as our age provides. They were a part of the great expressionistic period between the wars, not only in literature but in all the arts. Older talents crystallized and reached pinnacles and took on new dimensions; new talents were flung off like sparks from a Catharine wheel or the blobs of light from a roman candle. Expressionism—what I say is both myself in truth and creates a new world—tends to pyrotechnics; the fireworks are within us and are all around us and are their own meaning—subject to the least possible external control or common predictable forms of understanding. In expressionistic art we see what the forces are which we have to control by other means: the actual forces of human nature, of non-rational

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

behaviour, and of the industriously rational machinations of the devil—the diabolic, the daemonic, and the chthonic—the life that is in our soil. Expressionism compacts the Faustian spirit and the adventures of our conduct. This is a new claim for the arts, and perhaps the most ambitious yet in the long series since Aristotle. It is precisely the opposite from Shelley's claim that poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. It constitutes for itself rather the claim to undermine, to re-adjust, to put into fresh order the frames or forms in which we make the adventure of conduct tangible to our minds, and it therefore denies validity to pre-existent legislation on human relations.

No wonder all that we mean by the state and most of what we mean by public morals turn stony against expressionistic art. No wonder, too, that for all its talent and all its novelty, expressionistic art has never been popular with the new mass society that threw it off as a new turn—a new force—of the mind. It has been popular rather with the human fragments which the mass society also threw off—with the remainder of the old élites and with the new professional and intellectual proletariats: all those of us who, in Toynbee's phrase, are *in* but not *of* the great mass society.—All art is in a sense the daydream arrested and compacted in form. Most people like their daydreams to conform to their normal expectations and their immediate ambitions and to do so in familiar forms. Most of us like either happy endings or a lonely glory in our affairs. We dream to get rid of our reality and to charm the lights of love. Here popular art helps us out. More serious art—high-brow art—is also daydream, but it insists on responding to the pressures that make our dreams so strange and so full of prophecy: nightmare or revelation. Instead of rationalizing our experience we give our experience what form we can and set reason new and almost impossible tasks to perform. We recreate reality in rivalry with our own wishes. I think of Thomas Hardy who tried to write popular melodramatic novels for money out of ordinary melodramatic daydreams but, in what we call his better novels, found himself responding to and shaping dark forces. I think also of Henry James who wanted to write the best possible popular novels, but never knew what the deep moral troubles in his Psyche were that prevented him (the very troubles which as he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

expressed them give him stature) until, in August 1914, he saw that *this* is what we have been leading up to all along.

We have had another war since then, and the enclosure of the two wars suggests certain things about the talent that lay between them—or at least puts certain things in a violent murky light. We lived in a time of troubles, when the very torpor of our momentum let us see what monsters and what heroes we could make of ourselves in imagination—the monsters of our behaviour newly seen, and the heroes of our struggle with that conduct newly construed. Newly seen and newly construed: for not only did we live in a time of troubles, we lived also in a time when we were learning a whole set of techniques for finding—even creating—trouble: new ways of undermining personality and conviction and belief and human relation. I myself can remember when the Oedipus complex was a shattering shock and a neurosis was a ravening worm. It was not till later that we had the law of uncertainty in mathematical physics, which broke the last healthy remnants of moral determinism. But we had psychology which dissolved the personality into bad behaviour, we had anthropology which dissolved religion into a competition, world-and-history-wide, of monsters, and we had psychiatry which cured the disease by making a monument of it and sociology which flattened us into the average of the lonely crowd. We had thus the tools with which to construct the age of anxiety out of the older debris. Almost, the tools guided the hands and predicted the work. As if that were not enough, the same monsters, and more intolerable heroes (those who accepted the monsters) began their work in the world of managers. It was in 1922 that Mussolini made his march on Rome; and by 1939 the Faustian spirit within had come very near succumbing to the dictatorship of the scum of the earth without.

It need not have happened that way, but the risk of its happening that way was very great, and is still with us; and the arts have more than ever the job of enforcing new tasks upon reason: to show poetry as the wisdom of our violent knowledges—which is what Giambattista Vico said, in 1744, that poetry could do in his great work *La Nuova Scienza*, the new way of looking at knowledge. It was also, I think, how he came to say that justice was an emanation of the human conscience, and therefore changed as times and forces changed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the darkness and hope of these remarks something else we have long known shows the more clearly: the shifting contour and widening focus, not of one or two generations, but of three or four centuries, in the burdening and the possible scope of literature as it is a development in history. It is not the atheists and agnostics but the committed men like Reinhold Niebuhr and Arnold Toynbee who habitually say that we live in a post-Christian world; and the history of literature bears them out. In Shakespeare justice is the endless jar of right and wrong as it strikes upon the conscience. We feel in Shakespeare what troubled Joyce's Stephen Dedalus so much: the again-bite of inwit, or remorse of conscience. In Shakespeare, as in Montaigne, and not again going backwards till Dante, nor going forward till Pascal, you feel the constant explosions of violently irrational forces upon the conscience. These explosions were of their talent. From the first World War onward the explosions are commonplace, though the talent may be less or at least less acceptable. Except Dante, who I think prophesied it, we are all heirs to a realignment of the usurping and abdicating institutions which manage our relations to our irrational experience. There are many ways of putting this. Here is Marcel Raymond, who is trying to explain the apparition of non-rational French poetry from 1870 onwards: "An explosion of the irrational elements in the human personality had occurred in the era of the Counter-Reformation and Baroque art, but at that time the Church had determined the course of the mystical upsurge without much difficulty. Two centuries later, after the critique of the 'philosophers,' she was no longer in the same commanding position. It was the task of art (but not of art alone) to gratify some of the human demands that religion had thus far been able to exorcise."

"From then on poetry tended to become an ethic or some sort of irregular instrument of metaphysical knowledge. Poets were obsessed by the need to 'change' life, as Rimbaud puts it, to change man and to bring him into direct contact with existence. The novelty lies less in the fact than in the intention, which gradually emerges from the realm of the unconscious, of reconquering man's irrational powers and of transcending the dualism of the self and the universe." (Raymond goes on to remark that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

modern civilization and Romanticism crystallized at the same moment.)

An irregular metaphysic for the control of man's irrational powers, if I may so condense M. Raymond, these words on the sequence of these remarks seem to me to enlighten the motive-power, the *moving* power, of the extraordinary outburst of creative talent in the twenties. No wonder it is sometimes called a rival creation.

Let me list a few in literature. Pirandello wrote *Six Characters in Search of an Author* in 1921, *Henry IV* in 1922: on how it is we struggle for identity.

Ortega y Gasset wrote *Invertebrate Spain* in 1922, *Revolt of the Masses*, in 1930.

Valéry published *Charmes* in 1922: the identity of the spirit with its senses. For that year Proust had *Sodome et Gomorrhe*: the beast which springs and is sprung of spirit. Ezra Pound had finished *Hugh Selwyn Mauberly* and some of his most characteristic *Cantos* in 1921: the artist as hero *manqué*. Wallace Stevens' *Harmonium* appeared in 1923: a dandy finding an old chaos in the sun. Mann's *Magic Mountain* came in 1924: the intellect entered literature at a new level to meet and merge with the sick and the unseemly. Two years later, 1926, Gide produced his *Counterfeiters*: the migratory black devil in puritanism. And so on.

For our purposes, we have only to remember that Eliot's *Waste-land* and Joyce's *Ulysses* appeared in 1922, and that around that year hovers Yeats' most powerful work. Do not these works, as we lump them in one image which we cannot swallow and of which we cannot free ourselves, constitute a deep plea for the wisdom of our violent knowledge? Is not the poetry in them precisely the wisdom with which we respond to the great grasp of unreason?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GEORGE P. ELLIOTT

From the Berkeley Hills

Evening has drawn me here: the sunset like a bell
Has created calmness; the long day's languid change
Turns me toward thought; the air promises All is well.

To the east, highways lose their man-ness in a strange
Vaguening into paths; most of the stucco, white
Suburbs hide in the brown folds of the Coastal Range;
Against the rim of day's pale, lingering green light,
The hills in concourse roll lovely with the blue miles
And Mount Diable points the first peak of black night;
Ray of a star breaks through; Nature, as they say, smiles:
All's well. I'm sure all's well; here's all heart could desire. . . .
A law-obeying thought, to which nothing beguiles
My affection, nor would though all the stars should choir
That the pure beauty here must radiate from law
As light from a sun's sphere proves its obedient fire.
Broadcast immanence sticks in my literal craw;
There no more dwells, in this nearly natural scene,
God, Who only claims my uncontumacious awe,
Than in my Chevrolet dwells Spirit of Machine.
These standing tires contain forces that hold hawks high;
Waves that green this fender make eucalyptus green.
West, in the milky dusk, contiguous cities lie,
Like demonstrations of the existence of man,
Angular by curved shores; but my peace-making eye
Finds the checkering of streets evidence of small plan;
My panoramic mood transfigures to a grey
But gracefully drawn line that boast-excelling span
Over the Golden Gate; train whistles, miles away,
Make distance audible; the earliest lights come on
And wink like mica in the dry lake-bed of day;
Four hooters test the calm, like it, choir, and are gone.
Abrupt, like nothing else man's, the roar of a jet
Shakes the bowl of the Bay; down there, the cyclotron
Building, domed at the edge of Berkeley, will not let
Me ignore, who would, guards fences bombs; in a lab

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nearby, a man I know dries live germs, I forget
Which kinds, but all deadly. Amazon warriors grab
Poisoned spears to hurl up at the planes which dive low
To taunt their nakedness. Some slug, some slash, some stab.

I pause beside a bank where flowering thistles grow
In harsh profusion; stiff the thrusting blossoms swell
Bright blue and tall above the grey, thorned leaves below.
This blossom that I touch is faultless; I can smell
Faint scent; its hairs are soft; it gathers twilight air
For a still, small radiance; and all is thistle well.
All's thistle well. The peace, promised of God, was there
And is not. Physics and irony uncreate—
Though nothing outward change—that peace which is no where
Nor when, but comes and leaves (like love) at its own rate.
When I pluck this blue flower, my time-ambiguous hand
Obeys the laws of pluck—timeless—at ten past eight.

So here is my right hand, strong, the back of it tanned,
Ring finger oddly long; it I'm confident of;
It can write for me how little I understand,
How much I care, defy the cold with a thick glove
And insult with gesture, proffer a friendliness,
Adequate clenched anger, willingly scout for love;
How delicately move my fingers as they press
This staining thistle bloom, toss up, catch, and let fall;
It adds to me, yet I losing it am no less;
Mine, yet none of myself; part of whatever all;
Of God, being a thing; innumerably one;
Human as a city, yet wholly natural;
None of the atoms of my hand are of the sun
(But might have been); my hand made nothing that I see,
No domed building, straight street, barbed fence (but might have done). . . .
Such and so was, and is, but did not have to be. . . .
With my own hand I have unlocked the dubious door:
Free Will, or Luck, the Law, or Probability—
All crowd the entrance. "Me! Let me only in! For
I am the word, the soul's cable and the mind's plumb."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Twilight remembers home; here, now, there's nothing more.
The cities of my life, seen from so far, become
Strangenesses and pastures westward reaching to night;
Sea, hills, nor sky can be my God's familiar home,
For they, which must be as they are, cannot be right,
Be loved—they simply are. Where is the love to close
That door, that graceless door? . . . Sprays of rainbowing light
Up from shreds of glass glow, that moon from the ground glows. . . .
Men who make equations to hymn that harmony
In which all things hold fast, scatter, and recompose,
Whose symbols, I am told, mirror the mystery
Hidden at the jointings and boundaries of things,
Believe because they see; and I believe they see.
But I see other sorts of nearer happenings,
Inharmonious, obscure, manifest in locked strife,
Heart-hot, too slippery with the heart's reasonings
To lurk in mind's symbols: the thrust and brood of life.

I shall go home, for these have been for me the wrong
Shores. My way plunges. And a perfume of my wife
Pulls me from this handkerchief like a chord of dear song;
My daughter will rumple my clothes and say her prayer
Gladly when I kiss her good-night where I belong.
I shall dive back, for it's all waiting for me there
To penetrate, the world I know, my world to find:
My house, books which for me are hills and evening air,
The blank sheets of paper on which I learn my mind,
A woman I have kissed who thinks love is an art,
An old near enemy, the lame the mad the blind,
A man who loves me like a corkscrew to the heart,
The should be loved and aren't, my lost my betrayed friend,
And the bomb-physicist my neighbor: I must start
There my Godward searching, there plunge where I must end.
Love is my only where, love my calm though I drown
Of its turbulence, love my stiff mind's graceful bend,
My body's climb to awe, my bending heart's fixed crown,
Love my weather, my flower, my hills, my sunset bell.
I'm sure: because sometimes, like rays of bright light down,
When I have leaned clutching towards sin, I have done well.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Five in One

Through a curtain blurring the windowpane I saw
Dancers with round combs in their hair,
The five of them with a single-echoing step
Leaving the town's useful streets.

I doubted as they hurried that the proper road
Was graded thus, level and ruled,
Or that its fences would zigzag like law so sharply.
They tugged a long shadow after.

I turned them toward the crumbling ledges of a bluff
Down which they stumbled their own path,
Lightened by the laughter of a glistering girl
Running away up the veined surf.

I argued that the sea-path of the moon's beauty
Moving unchanged, so, as they moved
Was the bone of her dance and the way of their way;
They came to the wet shore with me.

As we paused for miles by the silencing breakers
Moon's mounting shortened their shadow,
A radiance unusable on the smooth sand
Haloing five-in-one our head.

In an Office

Click of clocks, those time machines,
  Will beat my heart until I die.
Elinor rests her typing wrists
  And holds my glance with deer-like eye.

Her delicate wrists are manacled,
  That she must tick a tock machine;
Yet I have watched her fingers prance
  The keyboard over, and I've seen

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Leaping laughter, time-exempt,
Poise in the arching of her throat,
And I have heard in her Good-morning
A time-contemptuous, wild note.

A doe lies dead in mountain brush,
Ants eat tunnels into her brain,
Buzzards shred her delicate flanks,
She soaks into the ground like rain;

But what is proper to this room
Calculates, and nothing lingers,
Ears are stoned by dictaphones,
Handles lock the amorous fingers.

Three desks apart, our twining glance,
Mutually incontinent,
Impels us elsewhere, leg to leg
To make that difficult ascent

To where, than in this clacking place,
Lovers may bound in ease of heart.
And when in sadness we shall split
In one another's arms apart

Back among clocks, my brutal tears
To feel so doubly I must die
Shall be made gentle by the prayer:
Where two have mounted, may I lie.

He Comes To

I tied my genitals off
With a cold, mental thread,
I mummied my heart with webs
From the moral worm in my head,

And I cast in plaster study
My involving guts.
Nothing but threw a shadow.
All my valves were shut.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A girl who is a woman
Steps into my eye
And soothes with mingling words
The worm I'm netted by.

Her shower of gathering touch
Is more than head can hold.
Her hand revolves my sadness.
All my body knows.

She raises my heart alive,
Motion becomes its rest;
And I have power to give
Milk to a virgin's breasts.

W. S. MERWIN

Luzerne Street Looking West

Some blocks beyond the new high school
It comes out in an open space between
A marsh, on the left hand, too small
To be called a swamp, and a weedy tract
Of shale and cinders, on the right,
Too indefinite to be called a field,
And that is all. The car tracks end,
The paving dips under a railroad bridge
And stops. Direction abandons
Any pretense of a plan and frankly
Returns to being whatever
You can make of it, on any side, through
A prospect of unrelieved waste,
Of so much that no one had known to save.
Up to the right on the low hill
The Washburn Street Cemetery spills out
From among its trees, down into
The potter's field. A disused mine-shaft, full
Of water, leads under the graves.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Beyond the marsh, canyons left over from
  Strip mines are filling already
With bottomless basins, shoes, and the stained
  Deposits of a shallow stream
Called Lucky Run. Symmetrical mountains
  Of culm, a half a mile of them,
With rusted coal-car tracks meandering
  Among them like cracks in brickwork,
Before you reach the real mountain with its
  Four undisturbed seasons. It seems
It is, above all, the unacknowledged,
  The unreclaimed, the entirely
Useless, that will not be forgotten nor
  Disowned, but follow us to spread
Their shapeless variety at the edge
  Of all we have made, and give us
No peace. But at least may it never be
  With anyone I ever know
As it is with this inexcusable
  Unavoidable place that once
I knew as well as any friendly mind;
  I never missed it when I went,
And never knew I loved it until now.

Luther

That old slider, the Prince of Falsehood,
I could recognize him in my cradle.
Though masked as the preacher he took the pulpit,
Though he appeared as a swine, as a burning
Wisp of straw, or would be dandled in
The shape of an infant, always I could
Name him out. And yet there he stood
Mocking me with a scholar's prim tone,
Insisting that I could not say
What he was, with any authority;

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Smiling to remind me that Holy
Church alone could pronounce him other
Than my own image, gnarled in my mind's mirror,
But that Holy Church might, for pay,
Countenance even that aspect of me
And indulge it with kindlier names
Than Evil. Then I flung the inkwell.
And every man may know the devil
From this day forth, who can tell
Black from white, for the devil
Is black. He is black. I have made him so.

Fable

However the man had got himself there,
There he clung, kicking in mid-air,
Hanging from the top branch of a high tree
With his grip weakening gradually.
A passer-by who noticed him
Moved a safe distance from under the limb,
And then stood with his arms akimbo, calling,
"Let go, or you'll be killed; the tree is falling."
The man up on the branch, blindly clinging,
With his face toward heaven, and his knees heaving,
Heard this, through his depending to and fro,
And with his last ounce of good faith, let go.
No creature could have survived that fall,
And the stranger was not surprised at all
To find him dead, but told his body, "You
Only let go because you wanted to;
All you lacked was a good reason.
I let you hope you might save your skin
By taking the most comfortable way."
Then added, smiling, as he walked away,
"Besides, you'd have fallen anyway."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Translations from Lope de Vega

1.

Dawns hung with flowers
In the cold winter,
Be mindful of my child
Who sleeps upon the ice.
Joyful mornings
In cold December,
Though the sky sow you
With flowers and roses,
Yet are you severe
And God is tender;
Be mindful of my child
Upon the ice who sleeps.

2.

In Santiago the Green
Jealousy seized me,
Night sits in the day,
I think to avenge myself.

Poplars of the thicket,
Where is my love?
If with another
Then should I die.

Clear Manzanares,
O little river,
For lack of water
Run full with fire.

3. HARVEST SONG (from *The Grand Duke of Muscovy*)

White I was
When I came to the harvest
Now I am brown where the sun touched me.
White once on a time I was
Before I came to the harvesting
But the sun would not allow
Whiteness to the fire I wield.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

My youth at break of day
Was a lustrous lily;
Now I am brown where the sun touched me.

4. ON THE TRIUMPH OF JUDITH (from *Rimas Humanas*)

The right shoulder of that fierce tyrant who, laying vain
Siege to the wall of Bethulia, summoned
Upon his own head lightning from heaven,
Hangs down bloody from the bed to the ground.
On the left hand the red veil
Of the bed-canopy, drawn back in anxious
Haste reveals the inhuman spectacle:
The ghastly trunk transformed into ice.
Bagoas, dressed, cries out against the hard
Armour, the goblets and table overthrown,
The guards sleeping there deaf to alarms,
And above, on the wall bristling like a crown
With the people of Israel, the head
And the race of the hebrews glistening with arms.

CHARLES TOMLINSON

Northern Spring

Nor is this the setting for extravagance. Trees
  Fight with the wind, the wind eludes them
Streaking its cross-lanes over the uneasy water
  Whose bronze whitens. To emulate such confusion
One must impoverish the resources of folly,
  But to taste it is medicinal. Consider

How through that broken calm, as the sun emerges,
  The sky flushes its blue, dyeing the grass
In the promise of a more stable tone:
  Less swift however than the cloud is wide—
Its shadow (already) quenching the verdure
  As its bulk muffles the sun—the blue drains
And the assault renews in colourless ripples.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then, lit, the scene deepens. Where should one look
In the profusion of possibilities? One conceives
Placing before them a square house
Washed in the coolness of lime, a hub
For the scattered deployment, to define
In pure white from its verdant ground
The variegated excess which threatens it.

Spring lours. Neither will the summer achieve
That Roman season of an equable province
Where the sun is its own witness and the shadow
Measures its ardour with the impartiality
Of the just. Evening, debauching this sky, asks
To be appraised and to be withstood.

The Atlantic

Launched into an opposing wind, hangs
Grappled beneath the onrush,
And there, lifts, curling in spume,
Unlocks, drops from that hold
Over and shoreward. The beach receives it,
A whitening line, collapsing
Powdering-off down its broken length;
Then, curded, shallow, heavy
With clustering bubbles, it nears
In a slow sheet that must climb
Relinquishing its power, upward
Across tilted sand. Unravelled now
And the shore, under its lucid pane,
Clear to the sight, it is spent:
The sun rocks there, as the netted ripple
Into whose skeins the motion threads it
Glances athwart a bed, honeycombed
By heaving stones. Neither survives the instant
But is caught back, and leaves, like the after-image
Released from the floor of a now different mind,
A quick gold, dyeing the uncovering beach
With sunglaze. That which we were,
Confronted by all that we are not,
Grasps in subservience its replenishment.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Farewell to Van Gogh

The quiet deepens. You will not persuade
  One leaf of the accomplished, steady, darkening
Chestnut-tower to displace itself
  With more of violence than the air supplies
When, gathering dusk, the pond brims evenly
  And we must be content with stillness.

Unhastening, daylight withdraws from us its shapes
  Into their central calm. Stone by stone
Your rhetoric is dispersed until the earth
  Becomes once more the earth, the leaves
A sharp partition against cooling blue.

Farewell, and for your instructive frenzy
  Gratitude. The world does not end tonight
And the fruit that we shall pick tomorrow
  Await us, weighing the unstripped bough.

Cézanne at Aix

And the mountain: each day
Immobile like fruit. Unlike, also
—Because irreducible, because
Neither a component of the delicious
And therefore questionable,
Nor distracted (as the sitter)
By his own pose and, therefore,
Doubly to be questioned: it is not
Posed. It is. Untaught
Unalterable, a stone bridgehead
To that which is tangible
Because unfelt before. There
In its weathered weight
Its silence silences, a presence
Which does not present itself.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

B. L. REID

Justice to *Pamela*

"Well, my story, surely, would furnish out a surprising kind of novel, if well told." —*Pamela*

After staggering for years under a weight of fame greater than he should ever have been asked to support, Samuel Richardson fell, it seems, and for a long time now he has lain kicking feebly in the dust of literary history. His novels, great in size and in some of their achievements, have joined that honorable list of virtually unvisited monuments of English fiction that includes, unhappily, *Bleak House, Middlemarch, Moby Dick, The Marble Faun, The Wings of the Dove,* and *Finnegans Wake.* Their wing of the museum has faithful attendants but few paid admissions, it is kept open by subsidy. Outside, in the open air of literary give and take, those few cubits that are spent on Richardson's *Pamela* are full of cloudy nonsense. I should like to lament that state of things and do what I can to change it. I speak to those critics and historians who depreciate *Pamela* because they misread her, and to the schoolboy who has accepted too gratefully the judgment of his peers that *Pamela* is another important book that he need not read. What I hope to do is to draw up a defence against the two commonest and most serious indictments of the novel: that it is fatally sentimental and artificial, and that its pretentious moralism is vicious and false. Literary judgments are happily subjective, of course—that is why they are so much fun and why people keep making them. But it is also why opinions are likely to differ so widely, and why, when the difference is diametrical, they tend to degenerate into childish "'Tis-'Tain't" squabbles. Such an ungraceful posture we may not be able to avoid here, but we can at least air and dramatize the vital point: that the Richardson issue is alive not dead.

My notion that *Pamela* is a novel of striking verisimilitude is by no means wholly heterodox, yet I think that emphasis in the received opinion, the schoolboy's mist, runs largely the other way. This seems to be a kind of standard schematic line of literary

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

historians: Richardson is progenitor of the sentimental novel, not the realistic novel; he is a captive of Puritan theology, hence a slave to all the violent special pleading and distortion of view that that dogma enjoins; he is a creature circumscribed by all the paraphernalia of middle-class sensibility—a shopkeeper with a shopkeeper's ethics and a shopkeeper's aesthetics; Richardson had to be satirized before we would have realism—the realistic tradition in the English novel begins with Fielding and *Joseph Andrews*, an avowed satire on *Pamela*. Thus Professor Cazamian leads off his chapter on "The Novel of Sentiment": ". . . Richardson, seeking his inspiration in Puritan sentimentalism. He has hardly written ere realism . . . sets up against his example an example that is openly contradictory. . . ."

Actually the scheme seems to me substantially but crudely accurate; so my quarrel here is a gentle one, not with the substance of the historians' line but with its crudity. The historian does *Pamela* very serious injustice if he encourages the schoolboy to tick the novel off as *merely* sententious, sentimental, tiresomely moralistic, stiffly artificial, and hopelessly prolix (and so obviously unreadable). There is truth in all these epithets, but still they do not contain Pamela, or explain her. Her story, I insist, is funny, it is touching, it is endlessly interesting, and beyond all these it is finally convincing: it grows true and actual. In spite of all its confessed vices, the novel does possess a dense and considerable verisimilitude. That is really all I want to argue at this point—that *Pamela* has a kind of residual realism that is much larger and more conclusive than critics like to admit: that it is a credible incredibility, a real unreality.

There is much that is patently unreal in *Pamela*, and we should begin by noticing its worst sins of falseness to life. These occur mainly in habits of style and of characterization. Thus the high rhetorical polish of the novel's utterance, its glossy surface and its elegant periodic undulation of syntactical movement—both beautiful and dull—is completely incredible as the epistolary style of a fifteen-year-old country girl. No servant girl, and no fifteen-year-old miss of any station, ever talked like this. I do not refer to her flux or her redundancy—which seem to me functional, charming and believable—but to her vocabulary, her range of reference, and her sentence structure, the general hand-rubbed finish of the dis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

course. Her rhetoric is superb, but in terms of character it is also absurd. The book is one long unbroken example of what I mean, and it is not even necessary to quote to prove the point.

Richardson's characterization, or rather his caricaturing of character, is a still more nagging flaw in his realism. Pamela, if we look at her only as she functions in the novel's tiresome moral line, is one-dimensional to paper-thinness; she is madly Puritanical, really a maniac of virtue. In a different direction Mrs. Jewkes and Lady Davers are also caricatures, character-absolutes of much crudeness in the conception, though undeniably, too, of an almost Dickensian gusto and impetus. Mr. B., while he is at least conventionally satisfactory as the baffled rake, is in no way convincing as the complacent husband—"palpably uxorious" was Milton's resonant phrase in another context for such behavior:

> . . . let me tell my sweet girl, that, after having been long tossed by the boisterous winds of a more culpable passion, I have now conquered it, and am not so much the victim of your beauty, all charming as you are, as of your virtue: and therefore may more boldly promise for myself, having so stable a foundation for my affection, which, should this outward beauty fail, will increase with your virtue, and shine forth the brighter, as that is more illustriously displayed by the augmented opportunities your future condition will afford you.

"O the dear charming man," burbles Pamela; but the reader sees too plainly that his outright transformation is shoddily motivated and ridiculously complete. His absurd *gravitas* and airs of old age at twenty-six make him not a legitimately altered character but simply an unfamiliar man. Thus Professor Cross was surely right when he said there was in Richardson "a lingering on of one form of allegory." But again this seems to be but a crude truth, and while it will carry us through a hurried paraphrase, it will by no means carry us to the real boundaries of the novel.

We may try, surrounded by Richardson's imperfections, to classify the means by which he converts the complex unreality of his subject, his form, and his personages into a reality considerable enough to catch, hold, and delight our attention. In order that we may not stupidly recapitulate the allegorist's emphatic error, let us remember now that reality is not absolute, not one but many. We may call for aid from a canonized realist, Henry James,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who thought more often and more wisely about the art of the novel than anyone else I know. In his great essay "The Art of Fiction," James said:

> The characters, the situation, which strike one as real will be those that touch and interest one most, but the measure of reality is very difficult to fix. The reality of Don Quixote or of Mr. Micawber is a very delicate shade . . .

In the same essay James testified to the centrality of the issue:

> . . . the air of reality (solidity of specification) seems to me to be the supreme virtue of a novel—the merit on which all its other merits . . . helplessly and submissively depend. If it be not there they are all as nothing, and if these be there, they owe their effect to the success with which the author has produced the illusion of life.

Reality is multiform and vital, then, and we are right to be interested in what Richardson *makes* us believe.

We see at once that *Pamela*'s persuasiveness is partly a matter of form and structure. In a purely technical sense, realism aside, the novel's worst vices are probably those of dramatic structure: it is too long for its essential work; too inclusive, too unselective; too often static in movement and slack in tension ("I like those great still books," Tennyson said, and wished for one of hundreds of volumes); it reaches its turning point much too early, proportionately, and the falling action is thus far too long and too merely thin and sweet. But if its sins are in part those of structure, so are its virtues. At the simplest level, we feel that the epistolary method itself carries a kind of gratuitous *cachet* of realism. That is, letters are normally vehicles for our common factual doings, a letter presupposes an actual writer and an actual reader, a letter is stiff and undramatic: if one wants to propound a fiction not a truth, why not choose a suppler, more active form? Our prior notions of the normal function of the form subtly if shallowly suggest to us an actual maiden, an actual seducer, and an actual marriage. The effect grows thicker as Richardson manipulates the epistles, the whole familiar machinery of hidden pens and ink and paper and wafers, of evasions and discoveries, of secretings in bosoms and underlinens and sunflowers. Then there is the whole clustering, hovering, lingering effect—later much multiplied in *Clarissa*—which comes to surround an incident as it goes its echoic progress

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in this method: the incident occurs, it is reflected on, committed to paper, committed to a porter, spied upon, received, reflected on, responded to, and perhaps returned to the original actors. The whole complex repercussive effect grows much thicker than the printed page. The epistolary form, too, excuses logically, though it does not justify artistically, much of the buttery smoothness of Pamela's unctuous rhetoric: that is, a letter is an editing of life, not life itself, and has an editor's option to tailor and furbish experience. So Richardson, having once posited a servant maid with flair and flow, can sensibly ask of us some suspension of disbelief—though by no means as full a suspension as he does in fact demand. As one quick instance of the conviction carried so simply by the epistolary form itself, consider the novel's first letter. There the cold plunge *in medias res* with the bald announcement of the death of old Lady B. and the immediate joining of the issue with her son have all the disorderly naïveté of life itself; it is only by hindsight that we see much later that they have as well all the ordered craft of art itself.

One does not know exactly how much verisimilitude to claim for Richardson's handling of the sequence of incident in *Pamela.* It is obvious in the first place that Richardson, in his somewhat fussy feminine way, is endlessly inventive of incident, but his inventiveness is not our present concern. More relevant is the fact that incidents in *Pamela* are likely to be little more than interesting fits of manners: if they are dramatic at all they are so in terms of revelation of personality rather than of deeps of character or morals. Still it seems to me that this admitted manneristic shallowness, while it disappoints our hopes of larger dramatic tension and thematic sweep, should not seriously disappoint our sense of drawing-room and boudoir reality, our humble guesses as to how life is normally conducted in such precious stations as the country-house environment of Mr. B. We should note as well in Richardson's favor that he depends very little—much less than the satire of *Joseph Andrews* implies—on pure coincidence or lucky accident in managing the sequence of incident; the confusing of Mr. B.'s letter to Mrs. Jewkes with that to Pamela is almost the only case that springs to mind. What is very damaging to the book's realism, on the other hand, is the stylized balancing of situations: outrage in the summer house is succeeded by sweet repentance in the sum-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mer house; tearful farewells by triumphant reunions; vulgar assertiveness by contrite capitulation. All this is much too meagre, pat, unmotivated—too sentimental, in a word.

But offsetting this distinctly wooden and artificial patterning of events Richardson offers two additional virtues of structure—a different order of repetition, and a large and noble quality we can best call modulation. This other simpler repetition is incremental, and it seems to me quietly hilarious. Instances of it are the superlative-plus-"in England" phrase pattern Richardson is so fond of—bluff, hearty and in its mingled dullness and good humor wonderfully life-like: "the loveliest girl in England," "the happiest man in England," "the honestest fellow in England." Or consider Richardson's exquisite fooling with the name of "Miss Sally Godfrey," with Pamela's fixation on that name like a mannerly lady bulldog once Lady Davers has rashly pronounced it, until the well-bred tension is all nicely relaxed with Mr. B.'s manly narrative of the days when he was a very bad boy indeed and his revelation of the sweet consequences of his error in little Miss Goodwin of the "fine black eye" and "genteel shape." All utterly phoney, yet still irresistibly affecting and, moreover, acceptable for the long moment of our reading as purest truth. Best of all in this line is Mr. B.'s fanatic urge to get his hand into Miss Andrews' cloistered bosom, where he infallibly blunders on the trigger that sets off her heroic serial fainting fits. The double fetishism of the maneuver is high low comedy, and especially in its testimony to masculine singlemindedness it is uproarious and real.

Now in all of this we may, if we choose, follow those readers who find Richardson humorless and helplessly moralistic: if we do so we have to call these and other repetitions nothing more than instances of slovenliness or sententiousness. But I think they are not so, and a careful reading of the management of tone and timing in the Sally Godfrey detail, especially, will show that they are conscious and delicious art. There is no question that they are delicious, the real question is whether or not they are conscious. If we were dealing with Fielding or Sterne or Smollett we would know where we are: with these writers a comic device is a comic device and announces itself distinctly in tonic incongruity. In the case of Richardson the facts are harder to come at. Biographical data are sadly scanty and inconclusive; lovable enough

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in his private postures as a man of family and business, he is very hard to like at all in what we can see of his public postures as moralist and man of letters. There, in what we can gather from the fragmentary lives and the published correspondence, he stands forth as a limited, pompous man, more than a little silly in his costume of sage, and marked more than anything else by a drab and invulnerable sobriety—a little Hudibras. By no possible strain can we adduce humor to his statements about *Pamela*, of which the original full title of the work can be taken as an entirely fair sample:

> *Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded.* In a series of Familiar Letters from a beautiful Young Damsel to her Parents. Now first published in order to cultivate the Principles of Virtue and Religion in the Minds of the Youth of both Sexes. A Narrative which has its Foundation in Truth and Nature; and at the same time that it agreeably entertains, by a variety of curious and affecting incidents, is entirely divested of those Images, which, in too many Pieces, calculated for Amusement only, tend to inflame the Minds they should instruct.

Yet, conclusive as all this seems, I am sure it does not conclude. Richardson did have a comic sense; it was potentially fine, as the Howe-Hickman relationship in *Clarissa* shows. But his self-conscious moralism told him constantly to depress it, and it almost seems that it emerges in the novels only when it escaped him in moments of inattention on the part of his censorious conscience. All this is an instance, I think, of the curious fact to which we shall have to return: Richardson is a classic example of a man misreading himself. He thought he was a great moralist serving his texts in a merely adequate bolus of fiction; he was in fact a jejune moralist (not, I shall argue, a dishonest one) but a great shaggy artist who was prevented by his own moral fatuity and that of his readers from ever seeing himself in an adequate mirror, currying his coat, and emerging as the truly first-rate novelist he should have been. In short, it seems to me we have to deal here with a prime case of *unconscious* genius. The little tricks I have been mentioning above are minor manifestations of that fact.

That other softening quality I have called modulation is one not easy to demonstrate, since it is a property of the book's larger rhythms and makes itself felt almost unconsciously in the main. By modulation I mean here the achievement of topography and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

texture that is various and interesting—rise and fall, shading, ranges of mood and coloration, tension and release; the whole vague but vital matter of subjective flexibility within the objective strait-jacket of the epistolary form and the sentimentality of the theme. My point is that this variety, this orderly disorder, is the rhythm of life itself and that Richardson commands it skillfully in *Pamela*. Perhaps the best instance is his beautiful control of the slow, faltering, settling movement of Pamela's descent from the peak of her apprehension to the quiet confidence of the moment when Mr. B. indeed marries her in an invincibly legal ceremony in an unquestionable chapel furnished with an undisputable clergyman. Other cases are the nicely imagined (and startlingly modern) ambivalent pattern of Pamela's love-hate response to Mr. B. before the marriage, the slow conversion of Lady Davers, the fearful, delightful reaction of Goodman Andrews to the spectacle of his daughter's good fortune, the broadening and lightening of the comic tone on the two occasions when the seducer is driven to hiding in the sacred boudoir. Only three important elements in the novel seem to me totally lacking in this quality of modulation. One is the character of the married Mr. B., in which the absence of shading is a fundamental and very damaging flaw; another is Pamela's love for her parents, and one neither expects nor wants that to vary; the third is her redundant piousness: of her piety one cannot quite say that it is incredible—only that it is dreadfully dull.

After confessing above that the basic principle of characterization in *Pamela* is allegorical, I suggested that that did not complete the matter. There is a strong residual reality in Richardson's persons that notably fleshes out the leanness of allegory. The heroine herself, who begins by being the most fully allegorical figure, ends by becoming the most fully human. Beginning in ignorance, one hopes for a time that Pamela is going to be a satirical figure: as such she would be quite perfect. But then one concludes, sadly at first, that Richardson has no satirical intention at all; he wants us to accept Pamela exactly as she fatally is, in full crushing sobriety—an impregnably Good Girl. This is disappointing, especially if one has trained on Fielding. But the thing that interests me now is how Richardson converts one, first, to acceptance of his whole sentimental convention and, second, to acceptance of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reality of this absurd little person and ultimately to delighted enlistment in the tension and truth of her maiden dilemma. He manages this, it seems to me, in a number of clear and legitimate ways: by setting her in a crux which, however much he chooses to cloy it, is inherently genuine and apposite to her way of life; by furnishing her with neatly counterpoised troops of friends and foes; by boning her fragility with an impressive willowy toughness and so making the balance reside in her own able little armory of innate powers, her craft and her ethics, her fanatical ability to cope—always a credible middle-class engine; by the pathos of the spectacle of the helpless old parents, quaking somewhere in the dim hinterland, hanging on with palpitations from letter to letter.

But still more interestingly Richardson satisfies our wish for satire and our sense of the motley truth of human personality by making Pamela, in little ways that can do her no basic harm, a figure of fun. The obvious traits in this line are her prolixity, her fondness for dull particularity, her transparent rationalizations (". . . he had this moment sent me five guineas, by Mrs. Jervis, as a present for my pocket; so I shall be very rich; for as *she* brought them, I thought I might take them"); her disingenuous vanity (" 'Alas, Sir,' said I, my master coming up, 'mine is but a borrowed shine, like that of the moon. Here is the sun, to whose fervent glow of generosity I owe all the faint lustre that your goodness is pleased to look upon with so much kind distinction' "). And while equipping her with these harmless vices Richardson supplies her as well with considerable insight into them—that is, with self-knowledge. She knows that she is windy, and that it is part of her charm; she knows that she can be tiresomely circumstantial, that she is prone to construe motives to her own advantage, that she has a prehensile ear for praise. Our knowledge of her knowledge makes her immensely more tangible to our credence. Surely, for an allegorical figure, this is a creature strikingly rich; and, for one supposedly anemic, amusingly full of blood. Pamela must be the liveliest incarnation of chastity ever made. She is its abstract embodiment but she is also thoroughly concrete—fully clothed in bright and fluent particularity.

In further testimony to the realistic aspects of Richardson's characterization we should cite his handling of the brother-sister relationship between Mr. B. and Lady Davers. Considered singly,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

each is a type figure if not a purely allegorical one—though Lady Davers is a good deal more convincing as a human being than her brother. In spite of their individual stiffness, however, their behavior in their special office as siblings is perfectly life-like and very vivid as Richardson manages them. Their interaction is colored by a complex ambiguity that is both affecting and comic, and is beautifully functional in the novel's plot tissue. I am thinking now mainly of the way in which the physical and emotional maturity of the two is conditioned and complicated by an interesting remnant childishness, by strong passions inherent, first, in the nature of each, but aggravated and set in violent motion by the multiplied facts of their past relationship together as children—their mingled recollection of past trauma and past felicity, the insight of each into his own foibles and those of his fellow, the impetuousness, stubbornness, and headlong arrogance which they wear like a family livery and which they recognize, fear, despise, and finally forgive in each other. All of this is enriched by the purest kind of fraternal affection and respect that is not sentimental at all, and all of it, it seems to me, is deeply imagined and finely done by Richardson; it is one of the best things in the book, and one of the truest.

Perhaps we can review most of the remaining virtues of Richardson's realism under the heading of solidity: here again I borrow a phrase from Henry James's classic essay, where "solidity of specification" is his parenthetical equivalent for "the air of reality"—which we remember was for James "the supreme virtue of a novel." By solidity James meant that effect of depth and thickness which enjoins belief, and he felt this effect was mainly to be achieved by fullness and aptness of circumstantial detail. Now whatever else *Pamela* has or has not, it has solidity. Its solidity is in important part a matter of simple accumulation and artful selection of detail—every incident, every shift of manner or motive, abundantly furnished with data for the five senses to convince us of its actuality by reason of its situation in time and space and specific environment. Of many possible illustrations of this we may note just a few. How real and how focal become those first four fatal guineas: "I send them by John our footman, who goes your way: but he does not know what he carries, because I seal them up in one of the little pill-boxes, which my lady had,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wrapped close in paper, that they mayn't chink; and be sure don't open it before him." How additionally palpable and comic for his costume is the seducer from the closet: ". . . O dreadful! out rushed my master in a rich silk and silver morning gown." Consider the verisimilitude of a single detail as Pamela squeezes through the bars of her boudoir prison, ". . . not without some difficulty, sticking a little at my hips." How lively and vivid is the flashing vignette of those three relics of Mr. B.'s unregenerate youth when they come to call on him as stately Benedict: ". . . three mad rakes they seemed to be, setting up a hunting note, as soon as they came to the gate, that made the court-yard echo again: and smacking their whips in concert." Or consider the abundant factuality of those three enlightening catalogs, Mr. B.'s "naughty articles," as Pamela calls them, her recitative of her proposed regimen as country wife, and the forty-eight points of her gloss from her husband's "awful lecture."

But let us join the moral issue at last. It is a knottier question than that of Richardson's realism, but the question is single and we may be able to satisfy it in a briefer exegesis. The problem begins, I suppose, with the novel's subtitle, "Virtue Rewarded," and what seems its clear double promise—that virtue must receive a tangible recompense, and that one practises virtue *in order* to receive this recompense. An unbroken long line of critics have found the cash-register morality implied in the subtitle fulfilled in the tissues of the novel, and have roundly damned Richardson therefor. It is this condemnation, which I find wrong-headed and overemphatic, which appears to have done most of the heavy lifting in the casting of Richardson into outer darkness. It is Pamela's innocent parents who, in the novel's second letter, incautiously provide the metaphor that has seemed to satisfy the figurative demands of generations of critics: do not, they warn her, "reward him with that jewel, your virtue." Monotonously through the years the critics have rung the weary changes on that figure and on Pamela the artful enginer, the virtue-vendor, the good-girl-with-a-purpose. From the last fifty years or so we might cite Mrs. Thomson, Leslie Stephen, Downs, Austin Dobson, and Joseph Wood Krutch. But Mr. Krutch is the most recent and much the most trenchant and we can depend on him to state the normal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

indictment without mumbling. I quote the crucial paragraphs on *Pamela* from his beautiful long essay in *Five Masters*:

> Nor is it possible, as one follows with amazement the proud exposition of her principles, to discover in them anything except the logical development of a shrewd determination to get as much as possible out of the world, for if we judge her by the evidence of her own letters she is a prig at best and a designing minx besides. Richardson had set out to describe his ideal of feminine character but he had created instead a coarse-minded opportunist because he had himself achieved a cynicism more complete than is possible to any except those unaware of their own principles. The virtue of Pamela is no more than a realization of the fact that her virginity is by far the most valuable of her possessions and a wise determination not to lose what has a perfectly tangible value. The society in which she lives has agreed that a continence, broken only upon those occasions and under those circumstances sanctioned by civil and ecclesiastical law, is the *sine qua non* of that decency without which a woman has no claim to any consideration whatsoever, and while prudence thus directs her to maintain it, her creator encourages her to believe that in so doing she is rising to the greatest possible height of moral excellence.
>
> Yet it is possible to account for every detail of her behaviour without any reference whatsoever to any principle belonging in the realm of morals. Like all maidens she had a jewel and the precious possession was one to be safeguarded with all the watchfulness of a traveller who passes through some bandit-infested waste. The thing—though to all appearances no more than a pretty trifle—has a value, thanks to which it can be bartered or sold, and therefore it must not be lost. He who allows it to be taken from him is criminally careless; he who gives it away is a fool. But in the end it must be sold. Thus, in the spirit of a dealer in precious stones Pamela goes about her business. It is not the man but his terms which she objects to and when he meets hers she accepts them. She and her parents rail against the wickedness of those who cannot hold out as she has done but by wickedness they mean folly. Skill in trade is a citizen's virtue. Pamela held out for a good price and in the end she got it. Thus is virtue rewarded.

All this is clear enough, surely. I react to it with a variety of emotions, chiefly amazement and a kind of detached rage. I simply cannot see it: there is no real evidence for such a view of *Pamela*. May I, humbly, well knowing Mr. Krutch's range and acumen as a critic, submit that in this instance he is guilty of a serious misreading, at the very least of an exaggeration equal to falsehood.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

His statement is finely emphatic but it seems to me simply untrue. I am reminded here of Richardson's complaint against *Joseph Andrews* as a "lewd and ungenerous engraftment" upon *Pamela*. Taking Mr. Krutch's diagnosis as an eloquent norm of the standard indictment of the novel's morality, and hoping not to echo Richardson's accent of adolescent aggrievement, I should say that such analyses are lewd in attributing to the heroine a prurience and a crassness which are simply not discoverable in the text; ungenerous in refusing to grant the true harshness of her empirical situation; an engraftment in applying a moral criterion that is in some sense anachronistic and impertinent. Pamela needs to be handled without mawkishness but with more charity and more common sense. But this gets us nowhere until we examine the text.

Let us face the facts of life for Pamela. She is fifteen years old, the daughter of "poor but honest" parents—that ghastly phrase—who have descended, through excessive faith in man, from modest competence and gentility to impoverished peasanthood. Providence has given her extraordinary beauty, charm, and presence; her good old mistress has taught her social graces (and a few airs) far more sophisticated than her origins; her parents have taught her the limited Protestant morality of their time and station. Of this world's goods she possesses, almost literally, nothing. She does possess the divine benefice of every otherwise naked human being, her virtue, which naturally (since society never ceased pointing at it so crudely) came to center in its physical embodiment in the fragile little membrane which is its seal and symbol. *Of course* it has value—value first as emblematic of purity, and value in the countenance of the world (and of the church) as a generic commodity, the only one she owns. Now how does Pamela treat her emblem? How much evidence can we find in the text of the novel for Mr. Krutch's character of her as a "designing minx," a "coarse-minded opportunist," a "dealer in precious stones" whose virtue is the "citizen's virtue" of the crafty bargainer?

From the moment when Mr. B. first "offers freedoms" and Pamela sounds the tocsin of beleaguered innocence, she is packed, ready, and eager to flee back to her "little bed in the loft." Nothing in her tone or her actions, it seems to me, can allow one legitimately to question the depth or the sincerity of her repeated protestations to that effect. He resolves to send her home and she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thanks him on her knees, and writes her parents, "And thus all is happily over." Looking ahead to her return to poverty, she writes, ". . . I hope to make my hands as red as a blood pudding, and as hard as a beechen trencher to accommodate them to my condition." She vacillates momentarily when it looks as if she may be allowed to remain with honor to herself and benefit to her parents, then when it becomes clear that honor is not in it she is again all adamant resolution to be gone. She plots with Mr. Williams elaborate escapes, then when those are undermined she makes a genuinely perilous attempt alone. She resists a real temptation to suicide. Her resolve through all of this is solid and undissembled and so, it seems to me, is its moral base. Her resolution begins to waver, clearly, only with the wavering of her antagonist's deviltry. When the spectacle of her impregnability and the persuasiveness of her prose have begun to soften and sweeten and cleanse him, when it begins to seem that he may think of her humbly as his wife rather than arrogantly as his harlot, then indeed Pamela softens, too, recognizing with surprise her submerged regard for him. But her reaction is slow, timorous, embarrassed; there is none of the delighted gloat of the triumphant schemer, none of the rehearsed response of the woman who knew it all the time. And when Mr. B. turns furiously once more and sends her away, she goes still honestly and willingly, though slowly and sadly now, regretting what might have been:

> I think I was loth to leave the house. Can you believe it?—What could be the matter with me, I wonder? I felt something so strange at my heart! I wonder what ailed me! But this was so *unexpected*!—I believe that was all. Yet I am very strange still. Surely I cannot be like the old murmuring Israelites, to long after the onions and garlic of Egypt, when they had suffered there such heavy bondage?—I'll take thee, O contradictory, ungovernable heart, to severe task, for this thy strange impulse, when I get to my dear father and mother's; and if I find anything in thee that should not be, depend upon it, thou shalt be humbled, if strict abstinence, prayer, and mortification can do it.

There is no crassness in any of this and no vulgarity. The morality with which Richardson equips Pamela is not complicated, not rich, not of itself very interesting; we may legitimately find it dull. We may not, on the other hand, legitimately find it contemptible or corrupt.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The viciousness of Pamela's morality, her detractors may say, is implicit rather than explicit—between the lines of the text rather than in them. This view would have it that while Pamela persuades the world that she is frantically defending her virtue she is in fact, under cover of the hurly-burly, conducting a subtle and rotten campaign against the heart and especially the estate of Mr. B.: her virtue is not her besieged bastion but her sally-port. But to read this in the story is to find there more than Richardson either stated or implied. If we examine the charges in this line, that, for example, Pamela dresses out her charming "person" to be seductive to Mr. B., we find them overstrained. Mr. B. cannot be blamed for being taken with such a fetching image, we must agree:

> . . . I dressed myself in my new garb, and put on my round-eared ordinary cap, but with a green knot, my home-spun gown and petticoat, and plain leather shoes, but they are what they call Spanish leather; and my ordinary hose, ordinary I mean to what I have been lately used to, though I should think good yarn may do very well for every day, when I come home. A plain muslin tucker I put on, and my black silk necklace, instead of the French necklace my lady gave me; and put the ear-rings out of my ears. When I was quite equipped, I took my straw hat in my hand, with its two blue strings, and looked in the glass, as proud as anything. To say the truth, I never liked myself so well in my life.

But neither can Pamela be charged with making herself consciously seductive. She assembled the costume as one appropriate to her willing return to humble life; she put aside much richer clothes as inappropriate; she put on the new simple costume for Mrs. Jervis' approval; Mr. B. sees her in it by chance, not by her design. Every comparable instance which may be charged with a disingenuous motive may be more strongly defended as possessing an entirely ingenuous motive.

Pamela is so very far from conniving to ensnare Mr. B. that she is completely, and completely honestly, amazed when the thing indeed occurs. I think we cannot refuse to believe exactly what Richardson wants us to believe: that the event is the doing not of her art but of her morality and her "parts"—her beauty, her good sense, her delightful overmastering literacy. I do not mean that Richardson fails to prepare us for the idea that Pamela is unconsciously in love with Mr. B. or that she will have him when

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he offers honestly; quite the contrary is true, he prepares us carefully and very well. The preparation begins with that little generalizing penetration of Pamela's in an early letter, "Is it not strange that love borders so much upon hate?" and continues through a long sequence of such quiet signal statements until the eventual reformation, proposal, acceptance, and felicity. Pamela's behavior throughout is consistent, logical, and respectable. She is right to rebuff Mr. B., right to fail to hate him, and right to accept him at last.

But if Pamela's actions are theoretically or ideally defensible, if hers is the right way to behave to a good man, should she behave as she does to *this* man? There indeed is the crux. It is easily possible to say sourly with Mr. Krutch and others that Richardson "had rewarded virtue by giving it the hand of a rake"—hence, obviously, that that virtue which receives a tainted reward must have been a tainted virtue. When I say at last that Pamela should not have accepted Mr. B. I intend no captious paradox. The point that needs to be made about all this is one that writers on Richardson persistently overlook: the failure involved in Pamela's acceptance of Mr. B. is not a moral hiatus but an *artistic* one. I mean that Pamela is made to respond nobly to an ignoble stimulus; the fault is not in the response but in the stimulus; our outrage should not be so much moral as psychological. What is involved is simple inadequacy in character drawing. When Richardson wrote *Pamela* he was not conscious or practised enough artistically, or sufficiently knowledgeable of masculine psychology, to be able to make Mr. B. complicated or flexible or full-blooded enough to deserve the hand of his heroine. He fails to deserve her not because he is evil but because he is not alive. What offends us in this marriage-dance is not the union of virtue and vice but the union of woman and mannikin. This inadequacy is the novel's worst crudeness, but the crudeness is in the art, not the morality. Later Richardson atoned for it in the much finer figure of Lovelace in *Clarissa*.

Critics of Richardson's morality are in great danger of committing Richardson's own sins of humorlessness and sentimentality. It is both humorless and sentimental, *i.e.*, unrealistic, to demand of Pamela, as we seem to do, a morality that is either absolute or very sophisticated. For where, in her own personality, her fiscal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

position, her creator's mind, or the atmosphere of the times, would she be expected to find it? She was dirt-poor, her moral equipment was drawn from the stupidest depositories of eighteenth-century Protestantism, she was fixed in a menial position in the power of an arrogant class which defined its menials as chattels and habitually used them as such (was it not the stout Fielding himself who got his widow's nursemaid with child before he condescended to marry her?)—what would we have? She must make her way and make it naked and alone. Do we really want to send her back to her little bed in the loft? Even if we admit—as I insist the text does not force us to admit—that while Pamela rode the horse Good Girl she led the pony Good Marriage, how seriously and realistically can we complain? Or how *morally*?

> *Most vertuous virgin! glory be thy meed,*
> *And crowne of heavenly prayse with saintes above . . .*

It may be that we need to borrow some of Richardson's own sturdy pragmatism in our view of the novel. I am thinking of such things as his clear-eyed confession of the reality of power and weakness; of the functionality of appearance—what beauty will buy; of the overwhelming importance of *things*—of clothes, for example, above all, of money. It may be said with some justice that money makes the real mood-music of this novel; it clinks and jingles unremittingly, just loud enough to hear, little golden bells on the trace-chains of the action. This is a novel about virtue hard beset, but it is also a novel about prosperity won by beauty, by wit, by adequacy to the event—and by virtue. I wonder if we need so violently to deplore the peasantish pragmatic substructure of *Pamela*, its dense bedrock of tough common sense. May we not assume, wistfully, that virtue and prosperity may coexist, without adducing therein a necessary causative relation? Whatever its disappointing simplicities, Richardson's moral dialectic never insists on that. What we have in this printer is the same thing we have in that other good journeyman, Ben Franklin. No, we have to say, finally, that the great fault in Richardson's morality is not its corruptness but its conventionality. Angered with the ordinary man for not being a giant, we are calling him a pigmy. Expecting too much, we have been unreasonably insulting. Richardson's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

moral scheme is discouragingly thin, it is dull, it is much too simple, but it is not laughable at any point.

Richardson is not of the company of the "thought-divers," as Melville called them, the men with the "red eyes," that much is clear. But he is no joke, and I think it is time we stopped patronizing him. He is, as I have tried to argue, a shaggy amateur artist who should have been great, a man whose genius remained unfulfilled because it was unconscious. His originality is immense, and so, as everyone admits, is his historical service. The reader furnished with the historian's notion that *Pamela* is the first full novel in English comes at the book with a sense of shock and gratitude: if this is the first of its kind, then where, one asks, is its primitiveness? This is an invention of startling completeness; like Athene from the head of Zeus, it seems to spring to life full-blown. One feels in reading it the same sensation, but larger and more intensified and of a higher order, that one feels in reading Poe's *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, where the first formal detective story emerges as the sufficient sire of all that were to come later. In both cases the invention is total and conclusive. It is certainly true that Fielding had to reform the solid but simple-minded morality of *Pamela*. And it is true that Fielding and others had to teach the novel niceties of structure—selection and proportion—and grace and economy of movement; but aside from that there was little that anybody needed to teach Richardson, technically, about the writing of a novel. He knew how it was done, and he knew how to keep the anesthetic of Puritan morality from immobilizing life. That is the very considerable artistic achievement of this novel. We need not condescend to it, but read it.

[*This article is the third in a series of revaluations of 18th Century English writers.*]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILLIAM GOODREAU

Father Sebastien Rale, S.J. - A Letter to His Brother

Injuriam facit Martyri qui orat pro eo . . .
—St. Augustine

Father Sebastien Rale was a French Jesuit sent to New France in 1689 as a missionary. He labored among the Indians of Illinois and Maine. He was murdered by the British in 1724 at Narantsouak (Norridgewalk, Maine).

A Narantsouak,
ce Octobre 1723.

Monsieur et Très-Cher Frère,

La paix de N.S.

During these thirty years of ardor spent
Au milieu des forêts avec les Sauvages,
I have been so occupied instructing them
In Christian virtue, dogma and in prayer
That I have had scarce leisure to write,
Even to you who are most dear to me.
Still, I cannot refuse the little account
You ask—that, *in fact, I owe*
In gratitude for the Love your letters show.

The village in which I dwell is called
Narantsouak: stoutly built
On the bank of a river, which runs
Into the sea not far below.
Besides a commodious Church, so well adorned
To be esteemed in France, two Chapels stand
On paths leading to fields and the shaded wood.
The Savage never fails to pause
A moment before these shrines . . .

Sometimes
I pray my work will save these souls

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And my own soul. I've learned to take
Their salty fish, ground acorn meal,
The pumpkin mash and sickly corn.
I've gone like a mascot on the Bay
And built an altar over rocks
While Indians died to head me off
From British troopers' scarlet red . . .
And Yankee traders giving a rien
For winter's pile of heavy fur.
Like trees, they fall . . . but do not fall.
I see myself crush down their earth.

I have trained a minor clergy
Of forty young males,
Who, in cassock and surplice, assist
At Divine Service. Each has his duty
Not only serving me at Mass,
But chanting the Divine Office
Before the Blessed Sacrament, and in Processions—
Which are made with a great concourse of Savages.

If I could only bring them Christ
And not myself, ainsi:
In August when they said New France
Was not bound by the Kennebec
I trembled with a chipmunk's rage
And had my children throw them back . . .
My Chief, his wife, depend for word,
For breath. They will not hunt or fish
Unless I try their traps and nets.
I had them burn revenge across
Those pilgrim fields—pillage by fire
Each house and barn.

We're forty leagues
From British coastal settlements.
This proximity, at first, somewhat pleased
The Savage not seeing the bald trap
Set for him and thinking only of the stores
Where he might trade. But at last
Seeing how fast the English villages
Surrounded him, he asked them by what right

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They settled on his land and even built
Forts therein, and some of stone . . .
La réponse qu'on lui fit savoir,
Que le Roi de France avait cédé
Son pays au Roi d'Angleterre,
Le jeta dans de plus grandes alarmes.
They came at once to me.

I said
Their hamlet's given for you to eat.
And now a price upon my scalp!—
They say one-thousand pounds and still
Contend "the jesuit"
Upsets the Treaty of Utrecht
So they can mark King George fine trees
And push the "aborigines"
Off the islands' fertile shores,
From river bank and salmon falls,
Then jam their whale-boats deep inland—
Build a block-house . . . take command
Of the great forests the river feeds
With one iron cannon ball.

Far dearer than the trade
The British could provide
Is the Faith the Savage holds,
And they believe to break with me
Would leave them without
Priest and Sacrifice.
My attempt to confirm the Savage
In his Faith is the King's great obstacle.

Each day I find myself alone
Along the river's edge, back far
Enough so not to see myself
Grow in among the sumac leaves
And stripling cedars rushing on
The river's face. I think I see
Another face: my youngest Brave's,
Who will go off in that first snow,
Northward where my forest bell

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Will never ring. He'll climb the rock
And ankle-wearing cliffs which rise
Into Katahdin's winter jaw
Of never-thawing ice and prove
His youth and worthiness.

But I should tell you of the land.
Each year on Assumption Day
We harvest beans, corn and squash
Which lasts until All Hallows Eve.
At this time we leave for the Sea.
Besides large fish, shell fish and fruit
We find bustard, duck and all sorts of game—
They cover the water like the green islands
On which we camp, where I bless the bounty.
By Purification Day all but the Hunters return.
They stalk the foraging bear, elk and deer.

But I no longer love the world
As I had thought. I sense its change
In me for what I brought
To rack against this sky
Where arrows strike their mark.
My hands
Pull Christ from his own bark and lathe
Away the proper bend and knot,
Lop off gray boughs and twist new leaves
Easily as a white canoe
Slides on flushing water.

Oh Satan, I am clawed by you!

I've given up the hope of France:
Nor do I care whose cannon drums
Into the red wound of the sun,
Whose timber falls against the axe,
Whose foxes bark in iron traps.
A thousand sacred breads have fouled
All but the stench and salve of fire.

Some years ago the most able man among
The ministers of Boston came

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At the foot of our river that he might teach
The children of the Savage. Neglecting nothing
He sought the children out and flattered them.
He made them little presents and put to them
Questions concerning their Faith, and then,
From answers made to him, he turned
Into derision, the Sacraments,
Purgatory, the invocation of the Saints,
The beads, crosses, lights and
Images we piously observe.

I dream they'll fill their hate
Into my eyes and throat with fists
Of pitch and mud; then prop me dead
Against a Church of broken bone
Which falls apart in lonely flame.

I dream my throat is white and bleeds.

I sent direct a Memoir to his school.
Some fifty pages proved
By Scripture and Tradition
Those Articles he dare attack by jest.

A wild laurel . . .
What's in a man
To sprinkle holy water when
You've preached your warriors to death?

It was that day I came across the hill
When Colonel Westbrook with his men
Had torn out from the river bank,
Then stormed with flame and bolting guns
Upon my Chapel, screaming, "Blood
Of Romish Rale, of Popery!"
Some angel gave me time to cross,
Attending me until I knew
I'd only given death to show
His consecrated bread and hold
This wood-burnt soul.
I hid in time
And swallowed every wafered host
Which I had blessed for week-day Mass.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A girl screamed for her black-robed priest;
A silent tongue gagged her throat.
A boy panicked in the fields;
His father's blood spat on his skin.
While black pellets battered Death
The glutton of the sacred bread
Ate with lust, with Adam's greed
That final yeast—viaticum.

I heard a *Dies Irae* spin
Like gnats around unbandaged wounds . . .
And fainting, heard my father's voice
The day I left the Norman shores . . .
Those billowed sails, the keen winds
Biting my eyes . . .
My cassock singed
And steamed. I swallowed every host
For every soul that had God's need.
I choked Christ's blessed body dead
Until my hollow throat seemed red.
I saw the bayberry candles melt
Across the altar cloth and smelled
My body's stench . . . I scrambled free
Sprawling beneath the evergreens.

I walked upon that ravagement
Absolvant des enfants morts.

A wild laurel borders the islands
Bearing fruit in Fall like the juniper tree.
They hang in such great clusters
One Savage can gather four minots a day,
From which I obtain ten livres of wax
And supply the Church with innumerable lights.

I shook the Chapel bell in tears
And cried Revenge! into their ears;
Then blessed each Brave that left that night . . .

They took my books, my breviary,
My little tin of China tea.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The dictionary by which I thought
My Indian parish would be taught
The mysteries of church and cross.

In Spring the maple-tree contains a fluid
Which trickles down the trunk to vessels of bark.
This needs only to be boiled . . .

Jesus, let me hear you hush
The ocean lapping on the rocks.
The winds which point the dark-blue firs.
The sea-hawk diving on white froth . . .

It is in death I'll bring them Christ
And show his beauty where they strike.
If I must break apart and feed
The forest green, the birch, the hawk,
The snake, my blood will so descend
To change into the roots we eat,
And flash within the roebuck's eye.
My flesh will fall away with fish
And pebbled stone. My bones will start
The buds we bunch for virgin brides:
Et puis, que mon coeur éclate en flammes!

I will turn upon myself,
And change my ashes sinew-white.

Priez-le, mon cher frère . . .

Je suis, etc.

I'll drown the Kennebec with life!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RICHARD CLAY

Maria Gardner

MARIA GARDNER heard her husband's voice behind her and dropped the trowel on the loose earth of the flower bed. She straightened her stooping back so she could look up at his figure against the sun. The water in the marble bird bath was splashing gently in the corner of the garden.

"Did you come out here simply to bother me with foolish questions?" she asked.

"It's a perfectly good question. It strikes me as crazy to find you working in your garden after a big lunch on a hot day. Why don't you do it in the morning when it's cool?"

"Does it strike you as crazy that I might want to get away from you and the children for a while?"

"No—," his voice hesitated and then went on with its usual vigor. "But why not go to your room and take a nap? Why come out in the sun?"

"I wanted to think, and this is where I think best."

The sun was so bright behind him that the expression on his face was hidden in shadow. His arm moved, and she heard the tinkling of ice in a glass. "I thought you'd be thirsty," he said. "I had Delia make some lemonade."

She smiled and wiped the warm moisture from beneath her eyes. "That was considerate of you, Horace," she said. She took the frosted glass from his hand and sipped the cold lemon drink, letting the icy liquid trickle down her throat.

"Is this a peace offering?" she asked.

"Partly."

"What's that mean? Have you changed your mind? Are you staying after all?"

"Now, Maria, there's no question of that. Can't you give up?"

"It's not fair," she cried. "You promised to spend your whole vacation with me, and now after five days you suddenly have to leave. I want to know why." She shook the glass so the ice clinked against the sides. "Just tell me why. Is that too much to ask?"

"I've told you already. It's important to me."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He turned his back and walked towards the house between the rows of tiger lilies and the drooping hydrangea. She picked up the trowel and the small hand rake and placed them in her wicker basket. Her floppy hat shaded her eyes from the sun while she sipped the rest of her drink. When the lemonade was gone she sucked the melting ice. The ice had a delicious silky texture on her tongue and squeaked when she bit the pieces between her teeth. She looked at the garden with a feeling of despair for all the work still to be done and climbed to her feet with a sigh. She had a handsome full womanly figure, but her real beauty was in her deep black eyes and her rich black hair pinned up like a dark crown around her head. Only in the lines around her mouth did she show the strains of this summer.

She put the basket of tools in the shed that had once been Terry's playhouse and carried the empty glass in her hand around the corner of the house to the terrace facing the lake. Horace was sitting under the blue awning, reading the latest Sinclair Lewis novel with a bright fixed stare. He was dressed in a clean white summer suit, and his strong hands and muscular neck were sunburned from a summer of tennis.

"We're going on a picnic for supper," she announced. "We haven't been on a family picnic once this summer. This is our last chance."

He raised his eyes from the book. "That sounds like fun," he said. "Where are you going?"

"Wherever you'd like to go."

He lowered the book to his knees. "Don't count on me," he said. "I have a train to catch."

"Oh, for heaven's sake, Horace, your train doesn't go till ten tonight. We'll be back long before that. Come on. It isn't a family picnic without you."

"I'm in no mood for a family picnic, Maria. You know that."

He raised the book and began reading again, holding it stiffly out in front of him and staring at it with a frown of concentration. As his eyes went down the page his dark thin face broke into a smile of pleasure, and he showed his beautiful even teeth. For a moment she yearned for him with a sudden desire. She lowered her eyes to keep from reaching out and touching his cheek.

"What mood are you in?" she asked quietly. "How about fishing?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He lifted his head and turned it and looked at her. "What?" he said.

"You haven't been fishing once this summer, Horace."

"There isn't any place I can fish. The tourists have spoiled them all."

"I'm sure we can find a place they haven't been."

"I doubt it."

"I promise, Horace. Please trust me."

He looked out across the lake and then stood up suddenly and slapped the book closed and threw it on the glass topped table. "Where did you put my fishing boots?" he asked. "Are they still in the closet under the stairs?"

"Of course," she said. "And don't forget your camera. It's been ages since you took pictures of the children. They'll soon be—." Her voice stopped as he let the screen door slam behind him. She wondered if he was being rude or was simply afraid to talk to her.

When she reached the kitchen she found Delia bent over last night's copy of the Philadelphia paper, peering through her strong glasses at the death notices.

"Find anyone you know?" Maria asked.

"M'am?" The old woman placed her wrinkled hands on the newspaper and folded it and tucked it under the chair as she stood up.

"I'm only teasing you, Delia. You're a morbid old soul reading about dead people in the middle of a summer day." Maria squeezed the old woman's narrow shoulders. "But you're my own Delia just the same, and you're going to make me the best picnic basket that ever was made, aren't you?"

Delia smiled with pleasure and immediately began to busy herself getting out bread and peanut butter when Maria stopped her. "Oh, it's too hot for sandwiches," she said. "How about some devilled eggs?"

"With mustard?"

"Plenty of mustard—the way Mr. Gardner likes them, but keep a few plain ones for the twins. And, Delia, let's have something different—mix me some creamed cheese with onion—you know—chopped up fine—and roll it up in little thin slices of chipped beef."

"Is that all, m'am? It wouldn't feed a bird."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh, heavens, no. We'll get some fresh corn at Drucker's farm on the way, and I expect we'll have some nice fat trout. Mr. Gardner's going fishing."

As Maria left the kitchen by the back door and went out into the furnace of sunlight she felt as gay and cheerful as if it were a spring day. It was not that she was counting on any miracle to change Horace, but it made her happy to have her mind occupied with plans that were under way.

She whistled for the children with their family whistle, and while she waited for them to appear she noticed the sound of someone playing tennis in the McCoy's court down the hill. The wire netting around the court was overgrown with vines so she couldn't see who it was, but she heard the steady plop-plop-plop of the ball being hit back and forth. As she listened the noise stopped, and she saw the vines shiver as something hit the wire netting from inside. A voice called, "Beautiful shot," and she knew at once it was Tommy. She strolled down through Anita McCoy's untidy garden and down the long hill to the tennis court. She stood at the opening in the vines and looked inside. Tommy was playing alone with Ann McCoy. When he saw her he bounced the ball on his racquet and walked towards the net.

"Yes, mom," he said.

"We're going on a picnic at five o'clock. Can you come home a little early and help pack the car."

"Oh, mom—." He frowned. He was a handsome boy, starting college in September, and had his father's dark healthy looks. "I had some other plans."

The girl ran up to the net. She was very pretty in her white tennis outfit with a pleated skirt. "Hello, Mrs. Gardner," she said. "Isn't the heat ghastly? How can you stand it?"

"Hello, Ann." Maria smiled at the girl, thinking how fortunate she was to possess such lovely natural innocence and enthusiasm. "I'm not sure I can stand it, but I'm here just the same. I was telling Tommy that we're planning a picnic for tonight. Seriously," she said to both of them, "you don't know how anxious I am to have a picnic that will be fun. I don't mean a lot of noise and excitement but a good time that everyone will enjoy and be glad to remember." She turned her eyes on her oldest son. "I need your help, Tommy. Daddy's leaving tonight. This may be the last time this summer that we can all get together as a family." As she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

saw him exchange a look with Ann she took the girl's hand in her own. "Of course, that includes you, Ann," she said. "You're the same as the family."

The girl blushed under her tan, and Tommy leaned down towards Maria and kissed her on the cheek. "We'll be there, mom," he said.

"You haven't seen Terry or the twins, have you?" she asked quickly to hide her pleasure.

Tommy was bouncing the ball on his racquet again. "Sure I saw them," he answered. "The twins were headed for the Van Avery's with their model airplane. And as for dear darling Terry she's probably down in her secret hiding place in the boat house writing mush to movie stars."

"Oh, Tommy, have you been fighting with her again?"

"I don't fight with her. She fights with me."

"Never mind. Go ahead with your game now. I'll see you later."

She left the tennis court and began to climb the hill towards Beth Van Avery's house. The plop-plop-plop of the tennis ball started again behind her. Now that she was out in the open away from the trees the sun blazed down on her. She wiped her forehead under the brim of her floppy hat and climbed the hill slowly, pushing her hands on her knees. Finally she stopped to catch her breath. Her heart was pumping hard, and her whole face was flushed with heat. She pulled a handkerchief out of her pocket and fanned her face. She looked down at the damp place on her dress where the moisture between her breasts had spotted the cotton print, and she shook her head, remembering the day when she could run up this hill and down again with ease.

As she fanned her face and rested on the grass she found her strength slowly beginning to return. She looked down from the hill on the quiet lake. The trees around it were limp in the heat, and nothing moved on the glassy surface of the water but the far off shape of the motor launch that circled the lake slowly and stopped at the piers by the big hotels. Although she used to think it was a large lake when she was young, it now seemed small to her, perhaps because there were more houses hidden in the trees around the edge of the shore and more people everywhere on the mountain. When she and Horace were children before the war it still retained some of the quaint and leisurely grace of the days of Grant and Garfield. There were fewer houses then, but they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were bigger ones and were surrounded by porches and outside stairs and crowned with turrets and towers that were wonderful to play in on a rainy day. She realized now that those old houses had been tasteless and ugly, but she felt that there had been a certain air of nobility and sadness about them like old people whose friends have died and left them alone.

Refreshed and with her spirits restored Maria stood up and climbed the rest of the hill to Beth Van Avery's house. She knocked on the rattly screen door and called out, "Hoo-hoo—Beth, are you in?", as she peered into the shaded room. A voice answered immediately. "Come in, Maria, and get out of the god damn sun."

She found Beth reclining on the sofa in the semi-darkness. "Were you napping?" she asked. "I hope I didn't wake you. I'm looking for the twins, but I don't suppose you've seen them."

"Seen 'em, *and* heard 'em," Beth said. She raised her ample body and sat up on the couch. Her dress was unbuttoned and her shoes off. She was a slow woman, passive and methodical, but she had no sham or pretense about her, and she was one of Maria's oldest friends on the mountain. "I wasn't asleep," she said. "I was resting from the heat. What a day! Sure, I've seen the twins. They were playing with Houten." She chuckled with laughter. "They were all making such a god damn hullaballoo that I sent Houten to his swimming lesson early. I can have Serena look for 'em if you want."

"Don't bother, Beth. They'll turn up. We're going on a picnic, but it's not till five o'clock."

"Ho! Have I missed something? What kind of a picnic—one of those big old ones we used to have?"

"No—just Horace and me and the children."

"Oh, *he's* going—well—" Beth looked at her sharply. "Has he changed his mind?"

Maria shook her head. "No, he's taking the ten o'clock tonight." As she spoke Maria turned away from Beth's warm brown eyes. Beth picked a cigarette out of a heavy glass box and lit it and let the smoke blow out her wide nostrils.

"What does this picnic mean?" she asked quietly. "Is it a farewell party, or have you decided to fight?"

"Oh, Beth—why must it have a meaning? Can't I just go on a picnic? Does everything I do have to have a plan?"

"Absolutely."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Maria sank into a wicker chair, and they looked at each other for a moment with the frank examination of friends.

"You can't afford to do anything else," Beth said, letting the smoke come out of her mouth as she talked. "This is serious, dear. You can't keep hiding from it. He's so sure of you that he does any damn thing he pleases. Millie was in Philadelphia two weeks ago and saw him twice with that girl. Alice said they were at the Dell together. Jessie sat two tables from them at Horn and Hardart's. I'm telling you, you've got to fight him tooth and nail or you're done, my dear."

"Well, then, I'm done, because I'm not going to fight him. I don't want to fight him, Beth. Suppose I threaten him with divorce? Will that make him love me more? Will that bring him back again? He's not a child. He can leave when he wants, and I can do nothing to stop him. He'd be gone and I'd be alone." She smiled wryly. "Like Sally Beaton," she said, "giving cocktail parties so someone will flirt with me."

Beth let out a rich snort of laughter.

"Is that what you want me to do?" Maria asked, savoring Beth's enjoyment. Then she continued more thoughtfully, "I've got to swallow my pride, Beth. I've got to keep things together somehow. He'll get over it."

Beth said nothing for a moment. Her warm round face was sad. "All right, dear, but it's not like you to give in so easily. Everything's on your side if you want to use it."

"I'm not giving in."

"You sound like you are, and it's a damn shame. I know if I was married to Horace he'd dance a different tune."

When Maria left Beth and walked back along the road to her own house she was overcome with a terrible feeling of lassitude and despair. The heat had sapped her energy so she could hardly keep her eyelids open. She knew Beth was partly right. Horace would respect her more if she showed some spirit and vigor, but she didn't know where to begin. If they had only quarrelled from time to time it would have left a path open to reach him, but their marriage had been drifting along without either of them asking much from the other for a long time, and she was afraid to put any strain at all on the weak bond left between them.

When she reached her house she went straight to her bedroom and locked the door. She lay down on her back on the bed, feel-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing the mattress give softly beneath her body. She shut everything else out of her mind and dreamed of floating on cool water without a care in the world, but it did no good, and after a minute or two she turned over and buried her face in the pillow and began to sob. The bed shook beneath her as she wept miserably to herself. She tasted the salt on her lips with a curious pleasure. Crying was like a warm bath that gradually loosened her tight flesh until her whole body was soothed and softened. After a while she was quiet, and as she lay with her head on the sodden pillow she heard voices down below on the terrace. She heard Horace, strong, assured, and she heard the shrill excited worshiping voice of her daughter, Terry, and she frowned at the sound.

She raised her head and wiped the tears from her cheeks, knowing they were shed in pity for herself and, being gone, were no more good. She stood up and took off her rumpled clothes and put them in the laundry hamper in the bathroom. She ran cold water over her wrists, feeling little shivers up and down her spine. While she was putting on fresh clothes she saw the curtains at the window move gently and lift into the room, and she knew that the first breezes of the evening had come to stir the stale heat of the afternoon.

II

The lake at Eagles Mere is high in the mountains of Pennsylvania and about two thousand feet above the sea. It is spring fed from its own basin and flows out through a small stream at its eastern end. Except for this single opening the lake is surrounded by a wooded slope on which the summer people have their cottages and on which the big rambling hotels are built. Beyond the crest of the slope the land falls away in dense and irregular woods in every direction. The beautiful golf course is cut out of this heavy forest, and from many of its narrow fairways there are breathtaking views of the Allegheny mountains rolling away in ridge after ridge as far as the eye can see. Through the first valley to the west of Eagles Mere the stream of the Loyalsock meanders and tumbles on its rocky bed, forming pools and small waterfalls as it crosses a rocky ledge or narrows between the flanks of the hills. This is wild country full of black bear and whitetail deer, but the animals stay well back from the paved road in the summer.

For more than half an hour the Gardners had been driving

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

down the mountain in their Packard touring car and were near the bottom of the steep descent when they first heard the sound of the waterfall at Worlds End. As the car rounded the last turn Maria saw the water shining through the beech trees. The pool was full of people splashing and floating and standing waist deep talking. "Honestly," she said. On the drive down through the woods her mood had changed and lightened, and she felt happy. She liked the intimacy of all of them together driving through the forest, and she began to feel adventurous and almost looked forward to something unexpected happening, but somehow all her joy depended on their being alone and away from prying eyes.

The car was parked at the picnic grounds and the others were half out of it when she turned to them and said sharply, "No, we're not stopping here. Get back in." Horace looked at her with a strange expression. "Well," she said to him, "is this the kind of place you want to fish?"

"That's right." He laughed and turned to look over his shoulder as he backed the touring car out onto the highway. They drove upstream along the paved road for several miles. Above the waterfall at Worlds End the stream widened out as the flanks of the hills drew back. The bed was strewn with boulders, some small and some huge, taller than a man, all scattered across the valley floor in such profusion that the Loyalsock seemed to have lost its way among them, remembered only in little pools and rivulets that sparkled here and there around the sun baked stones.

All the places they had ever been before were occupied, and as they drove on for mile after mile the valley narrowed again until finally they reached the end of the paved highway and found themselves driving on an old logging road full of ruts and bumps and showing no sign of use for years. Horace stopped the car and rested his strong hands on the wheel as the motor idled.

"This is a foolish waste of time," he announced. "We haven't got all day. Let's go back where the others are."

"Yes, mummy, why *are* you so fussy? You're *ruining* our picnic." Terry's youthful voice was uncontrolled and shrill. She threw her mass of golden hair from side to side as she turned her head from one to the other and wriggled her Dresden doll figure on the seat between them.

"Don't take that tone with me," Maria said sharply, "either of you."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Maria looked around at the heavy growth of hickory and the tangled huckleberry and wild laurel bushes. She looked down the old road ahead where the trail was nearly overgrown and the sun shone through on the wild grass below. Something stirred in her memory, and she had a feeling that she had been here long ago. Perhaps it was a dream. Perhaps it was one of those occurrences of double vision she sometimes had. "I want to go further," she said. "It's important to me."

She saw Horace's dark urbane eyes regard her for a moment carefully and then flicker once as his right hand pulled the gear shift back into low and touched Terry's knee. They jounced along the logging road, rolling from side to side like a small vessel at sea, until they passed the curve and could no longer look back and see the highway. The big shiny radiator of the Packard plowed through the flowing tendrils and the new branches that closed the way ahead of them. For ten minutes they crept along without hearing the sound of water. As they started to climb a slope Maria had a feeling that they were going in the wrong direction away from the stream, and she felt her determination weaken. She was afraid that she really had wasted the precious time they had together, and she blamed herself bitterly for being tricked by her false memory and intuition. They cleared the crest and coasted slowly down the north side of the ridge, and she almost cried out with unexpected relief and joy.

Before her eyes she saw a beautiful shady glen in the woods. She could hear the splashing of the stream, and she knew that they had somehow rejoined its course when she saw the pool beneath the overhanging rocks. At the noise of their approach a muskrat plunged into the water and made a V shaped trail on the surface of the pool as he swam to the opposite shore. Somewhere among the trees a blue jay was chattering, and she saw the quick spot of color as a scarlet tanager disappeared in the berry bushes. The beams of sunlight that pierced the oak and hickory leaves were bright and hot on the grassy floor, but the flickering shade and the sound of water refreshed her.

"This is perfect," she said. "Let's stop here."

Everyone climbed from the car and stretched and began to unpack. Tommy took his victrola from the back seat while Ann picked up her records, and they went off together towards the water. The twins chased each other around the car in an excess

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of pent up energy until one of them bumped her and she smacked him on the bottom. Then they ran off through the hawthorn bushes. Horace lifted the picnic basket by both handles and carried it heavily down the path with Terry on his heels carrying his boots and fishing tackle. Maria watched them with her hand on her cheek, wondering whether Terry might not be a hindrance to her. She took the folded picnic blanket from the back of the car and carried it over one arm as she leaned down and picked a few wild strawberries that peeped from under their leaves at the sunny places along the path. Their juice tasted warm and sweet as she crushed them with her tongue against the roof of her mouth.

When she reached the pool she was surprised at its size. It was a hundred yards long and twice as wide. The stream entered by a grove of sapling oaks at one end and flowed out over a shelf of rock at the other. The opposite shore was steep and rocky and covered with hemlocks whose trunks were curved at the base where the roots clung to the ledges of rock. On her side was a small sandy beach just wide enough to sit on and a large sycamore log that had fallen across the beach into the pool. The water was so still and clear in the sunlight that she could see tiny brown fish in schools darting in and out of the patches of sun.

Horace had put the picnic basket by the sycamore log where he was sitting while Terry helped him into his boots. He stood up and stamped his feet to settle them, and then he strapped the tops of his boots to his belt and tightened the straps. As he waded into the water he whipped his right arm back in several practice casts of the line, flexing his arm in a strong supple motion which Maria watched until she saw that Terry was also watching.

She turned her back on the pool and unfolded the red and yellow Indian blanket, spreading it on the grass by the edge of the sand. She noticed that Tommy and Ann were already settled by themselves a little way off under the trees. The victrola was open between them, and he was winding the crank while she chose a record from the album by her side. As the record was put on and began to spin Maria heard the clear English voice singing—

I feel so lazy when I'm
Lying in the hay,
Sunny summer day,
Cares are miles away—

and she recognized it as one of the records by an English dance

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

band that was so popular that summer. She remembered that Tommy had given Ann the whole album of English records for her birthday, and she smiled to herself and decided to leave them alone.

"Terry, sweet," she said as she opened the picnic basket. "It's time to get to work."

Terry pouted her small mouth. "Isn't anyone *else* going to help? Why do you pick on *me*?"

"I'm not picking on you."

"Yes you *are*. You're mad at me because I wouldn't help pack the car."

"Don't be idiotic. Now get to work at once and learn to pull your own weight for a change." Maria looked away with annoyance and whistled for the twins. She was vexed with herself for being impatient with Terry, and when the twins came crashing out of the underbrush, wild eyed, dirt smeared, and covered with scratches from the hawthorn bushes, she scolded them roundly for tearing their clothes and smacked them both on the bottom.

"I'll have no more nonsense," she said. "This is a family picnic, and everybody in the family is going to do his share." She put the twins to work making two fireplaces on the beach. Under her direction they made the first one by scooping out a basin in the sand and filling it with dried leaves and twigs and broken branches gathered from under the nearby trees. She lit this fire at once so she would have coals on which to roast the corn. The other one they built in the usual manner, arranging stones of the same size in the shape of a horseshoe so the frying pan could sit above the fire. But she did not light this fire. She wanted to keep it ready to fry the trout, if there were any, and she prayed there would be.

Meanwhile Terry was setting out the silver and the paper plates and waxed cups on the picnic blanket in a sullen slovenly way. She took the green ginger ale bottles by their necks and plunked them into the water to cool. On her second trip one of the bottles hit a rock under water, and Maria saw the green glass shiver in splinters and the frothy liquid spill on the pond.

"Oh, clumsy," she cried. "Clumsy—clumsy—clumsy!"

Terry's blue eyes stared at her in fright. "I'm sorry, mummy. It was an accident. *Honestly*. I didn't do it on *purpose*."

"All right—" Maria pressed her lips together and shook her head. "You never do anything on purpose," she said, "but you're

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

worse than useless just the same." When she saw her daughter's face turn ugly and red with defiance Maria relented and sighed. She reached in the picnic basket for a brown paper bag of Delia's toll house cookies and emptied them on a plate as she talked.

"Now, Terry, be a dear," she said. "You know how Daddy loves wild strawberries. I saw lots of them back in the woods. Forgive me for being angry with you and go pick us some for a treat."

Terry wrinkled her little nose. "You don't fool *me*," she cried. "I know you just want to get *rid* of me—I know all *about* it." But she took the paper bag and started back to the woods, swinging her arms and legs.

The first fire had burned down to the coals Maria wanted, and she leaned over and spread them out with a stick. The corn was still wrapped in its tight green sheath of leaves as she placed each ear on the bed of coals. The silky tassels curled and disappeared in quick little wisps of smoke as they were touched by the heat. When all the ears were lying side by side Maria swept the remaining coals back over them like a blanket, and a cloud of wet heavy smoke rose from the roasting corn.

As she was working over the fire Maria glanced up several times at Horace standing in the pool with the water up to his thighs. For a few minutes he would stand in one place, letting his line follow the drift of the current, and then he would move farther away upstream and cast once more, lifting the rod backwards like a whip and snapping the line so quickly that all she could see was the flicker of droplets of water like splinters of glass in the sun. Once again she had the disturbing sensation that all this had happened before. She frowned and looked around her at the pool and the heavy growth along the shore. It was larger than any other pool she'd seen on the Loyalsock, and she wondered why it wasn't known or had been forgotten by everyone. She held her arms by the elbows and listened to the chittering of birds in the blueberry bushes and heard a sharp note, "sweet—sweet," and again, "sweet—sweet," and she looked up quickly in the sycamore above and saw the swift small streak of violet blue moving from branch to branch, and she whispered, "Children, quick, an indigo bunting—look," pointing with her finger and feeling her heart lift and fly with the swift beauty of the little creature. When she looked down she saw that no one had heard. No one had seen the lovely bunting. It was all her own. For a moment she was so full of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

happiness and peace that she uttered a silent prayer of thanks to God for giving her this afternoon.

As she became conscious again of her surroundings she saw that the twins were skipping stones on the surface of the pool and she heard the record that Tommy and Ann were playing. It was a sentimental slow tune that she liked better than any in their album. The clear English voice was singing now about love and love's old story—

Whatever hearts may desire,
Whatever life may send,
This is a tale that never will tire,
This is a song without end.
Love is the strongest thing,
The oldest yet the latest thing;
I only hope that fate may bring
Love's story to you.

And a piano trill and—

Love is the sweetest *thing.*

Maria smiled to herself as the tune ended, thinking it was all quite simple and lovely when it was put that way, and then she heard Horace shouting and saw him waving his fist at the twins. She realized that the stones they skipped were stirring the pool, and she also shouted at them so they scampered back to the beach. Horace walked in from the deep part of the pool until his rubber boots were splashing in the shallow water. She could see his grin and the four trout he held up by the gills. Even Tommy and Ann stood up with the rest of them as they waited on the edge of the sand for him to arrive. He placed the fish at their feet with pride.

"Aren't they beauties?" he asked, looking up at Maria as he squatted beside them on the beach. They were lithe plump fish, golden brown and shining on the sand. They flipped their tails with their last gasp of life, and for a moment she felt sorry for them. "Of course, I can't take all the credit," he continued, looking around with a gleam of pleasure in his eye. "They almost asked to be caught. I don't think anyone's fished this pool in years. There's something strange—."

He broke off and shook his head as he picked up a fish in his hands. With his long sharp knife he sliced off its head and tail. He slit the golden trout up the belly and opened it with his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thumbs, digging out the guts and throwing them in the water. He talked as he worked, squatting and sitting back on his haunches. "There's something very queer about this place," he said again, glancing around. "I wonder why no one comes here. It's not too far from the road. I keep thinking I've been here before, but I can't remember when."

"You do? Heavens, Horace, so do I, but I thought I was crazy. Are we both crazy?"

"Maybe we are," he said as he looked around with his eyes narrowed in concentration. The sun had gone down beyond the ridge and left a magic silence in the shadowed wood. Between the heat of day and the cool of twilight the birds and insects had come to rest. "And maybe we aren't," he said abruptly. "Maria, I've got it. Think now! When we were children before the war where did we always go on picnics? Do you remember?"

"Worlds End," she replied.

"Yes," he said, "that's what they called it. It had the same name, but it wasn't the same place. It wasn't the pool by the waterfall. No, Maria, it was this pool here—right here. This is our old picnic ground. This is the old Worlds End. Now you remember it, don't you?"

"Oh, yes," she gasped. "I do—I do—I certainly do—." Maria had the kind of memory that buries the past like images preserved in amber. "Yes," she cried. "Oh, heavens, what picnics we had then—"

"The old Eagles Mere picnics," he said.

"—seven or eight carriages—and we'd spend all day—and going home in the evening we sang the old songs—Dinah and Dixie and—oh, Horace, do you remember the time your father was teaching you to fish and you fell flat on your face in the water?"

"No."

"Well, you did, and your mother made you wear my petticoat while your pants were drying on a bush. Now you remember."

"No."

"Oh, Horace, you don't want to remember, do you? Well, I'm not surprised. You always used to be shy then. You went off and hid in the woods that day. I guess you were ashamed to wear a girl's clothes, weren't you?" She smiled.

He stared at her, and his usual urbane and insulated manner seemed to have vanished. He returned her smile in a shy quick

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

self-deprecating way that she hadn't seen for years. "I guess you're right," he said. "How old were we then? Ten or twelve, I suppose."

"Ten, I think."

"It's been nearly thirty years," he said thoughtfully. "It's hard to believe."

"Yes," she said, "I know."

"That's most of our life—."

She expected him to say more, but he turned away and began to unstrap his fishing boots from his belt. She had reached him for a moment, but now he was gone away.

"Horace, what happened here?" she asked quickly. "Why was this lovely place abandoned? Do you know?"

"What do you mean?" he asked. As he sat on the log he stretched out his legs and kicked off the boots.

"I don't know. We always came here and then people stopped coming. Why? Something terrible happened—long ago—what was it? Do you remember?"

"No." He looked up at her and frowned. "Like what?" he asked.

"Like someone being clawed by a bear or bitten by a snake or—"

"Yes—." The word escaped him like the sharp exhaust of some engine inside him that pushed him to his feet. "Where is she?" he asked.

"I sent her to pick you some strawberries."

"Where?"

"Back in the woods. Why? Oh, Horace, you don't think—"

He was gone. She started back through the trees in a half run, half walk, feeling frightened to the edge of panic by his urgency and the expression she'd seen on his face. Suddenly she hated all the peace and beauty of the place that had made her happy a while before. She felt seduced and betrayed. Horace slowed down and strode by her side, easily keeping pace with her hurried steps. As they left the path and entered the bushes he pushed a way through for her and said over his shoulder as if to calm her, "I'm sure it's all a false alarm. Terry can take care of herself." The words were hardly out of his mouth when Maria heard a low wailing whimper of fear followed by a terrible frightened scream that seemed to come from a point only a few feet ahead of them. She halted and covered her mouth with her hands as she stared at Horace's frozen back. He let go of a branch so it swung back and stung her in the face. As he crashed forward through the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

underbrush she followed his charging path. When she reached him he was on his knees by Terry's body next to a pile of rocks. Terry was on her side among the strawberry vines crying hysterically, "Daddy—daddy—daddy—." As Maria watched and wavered, feeling faint, Horace took the fish knife from his belt and carved a cross in his daughter's ankle in the soft place above the Achilles' tendon. He must have cut deep because the blood gushed out just before he put his mouth to cover it. Maria could not speak and hardly dared to breathe as he raised his head and spat red on the grass and lowered his mouth to the wound. The third time he did this she fixed her frightened eyes on a point a few feet from Terry's shoes, attracted by some movement in the grass. To her horror she saw a giant snake lying there, copper colored and six feet long and as thick as a garden hose. She sucked air into her lungs, meaning to scream, but gasped with dry silent coughs and could not utter a sound. She wanted to turn and run and keep running until she fell exhausted. She wanted to grab her husband's shoulders in both hands and shake him to show him the danger. But she did nothing. She stood petrified.

Slowly sense and balance returned to her. The horrible snake did not move. His round eyes stared at her without winking. She took a step and saw that he was not watching her but Horace. She slowly circled to one side with her eyes fixed on him, but still he did not move. When she was nearly behind him he wriggled and slipped a foot closer to Horace's bent down head. Horace spat once more, oblivious of all about him as he leaned down to Terry's ankle. Maria was now behind the snake. Her whole body trembled. She reached down and grabbed its tail and lifted it from the grass. The copperhead coiled and turned back on her and whipped his thick rope body so violently that she almost dropped him again and ran. But she held on, lifting the tail higher as the head whipped one way and another and the tongue flicked and the fangs snapped. Without thinking what she was doing she swung the vile snake in a circle and smashed its head against a boulder. Again and again she swung it around and smashed it against the same large boulder with blind ferocity and desperation until it hung like a limp rope in her hand, bloody and torn and lifeless. But still she did not dare let go. Her eyes could not focus, and she could see nothing except in a blur. When Horace stood in front of her and held her trembling arms and gently forced her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fingers loose from the snake's tail she knew who he was. Her senses returned, and she could see his white exhausted face under the tan. Beside him she saw Tommy, awkward and concerned. The others were there, and Terry was still on the ground, a big white bandage stained with blood around her ankle. The arm of Horace's shirt was gone, and she knew he'd ripped it for the bandage. She began to shiver as if she had a chill. The danger had passed, and she knew she was only shaking from relief, but she couldn't stop it. She saw Horace lift Terry in his arms and carry her away, and her teeth chattered as she weaved her head and stumbled woodenly while Tommy and Ann helped her by the elbows towards the car.

III

Darkness was falling fast as they began to climb out of the valley. Horace was in the front seat at the wheel with Tommy and Ann beside him. The twins were huddled on the floor at Maria's feet while she sat in back with Terry's head in her lap. Terry was half delirious, and Maria felt her twist her head from side to side as she moaned, "Daddy—daddy—daddy." Maria leaned down and whispered, "Hush, dear—we'll be there soon," as she stroked her cheek and the back of her neck. The girl's skin was fiery hot, and Maria called out, "Please hurry, Horace."

The engine roared as they neared the crest and came up into the last daylight. They cleared the ridge with a burst of speed and plunged into the deepest part of the forest where the fireflies winked beneath the trees. She looked back for a moment at the stream almost hidden in the shadows of night and had such a feeling of fear and revulsion that she would gladly have wiped the whole valley from the face of the earth if it had been within her power.

When they reached Eagles Mere it was dark, and the moon was rising in the east. Its silver light lay gently on the grass and the roofs of the houses and cast long shadows from the cedar trees. Horace carried Terry to her bedroom while Maria phoned Dr. Jack, who came at once. He was a fashionable doctor from Philadelphia who spent his summers at Eagles Mere because he liked the social life. He was always well dressed and neat with his little moustache, and he smelled slightly of cocktails at this time of evening. He disappeared with his black bag into Terry's room.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Maria looked at those in the hall. Even Delia had arrived and was dabbing her eyes with the edge of her apron.

"Please," Maria said. "The doctor's here now and everything'll be all right. You twins should be in bed. And Tommy—," she paused.

"That's all right, mom. We're leaving. I just wanted to tell you I think you were swell."

"Yes, Mrs. Gardner, I've never seen anything like it. I don't know how you had the nerve. I admire you so for what you did."

"Thank you, Ann." Maria smiled at the lovely quiet face of the girl. "Thank you both," she said, patting Tommy's arm.

As they went down the stairs and out of sight Maria opened the door of her daughter's room and entered and closed it softly behind her. Terry was lying on the bed with a bright light shining on her leg. The two men were bent over her, and both raised their eyes quickly and lowered them again. She saw a hypodermic in Dr. Jack's hand as the light glistened on the slender tube of glass. She felt guilty for what had happened to Terry and couldn't bear to watch the needle pierce her flesh. She turned her head away and squeezed her fingers, and when she heard her daughter whimper and cry she frowned and went over to the bed and said, "You're hurting her. Stop it."

"It's only the anti-toxin, Maria. She has to have it in case there's any poison left in her," Dr. Jack explained patiently as he wiped off the needle and put the hypodermic back in its case. "I'll give her a sedative so she'll have a quiet night. Can you get me a glass of water, please."

When Maria brought the glass back from the bathroom he was removing the crude bandage around Terry's ankle. "Ah, here we are," he said, looking up. He rose and took the glass from her hand. Lifting Terry's head from the pillow he gave her a capsule to put in her mouth and held the glass of water against her lips. "Now swallow," he said. Terry rolled her feverish eyes and did what she was told.

Maria noticed that Horace was sitting by the bed holding Terry's hand. She felt useless. "Is there anything more I can do?" she asked. Neither of them answered. Dr. Jack removed the bandage around the wound and leaned down and peered at the cross made by the knife. He touched it with his fingers. "Good,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he said. "Very neat." He anointed it with antiseptic and covered it with a new bandage of gauze and adhesive. "She'll be all right," he said, standing up. "Tomorrow she'll have a reaction. Better keep her in bed for a few days. Light meals. Soup, crackers, ice cream. Nothing heavy or fried in fat. Let me know if you need me."

He closed his bag and started to leave.

"Thanks, Bill," Horace said in his deep rich voice. "Wait a minute. I'll see you out."

"There must be something I can do," Maria burst out. "Can I get an ice pack for her leg? Would that help?"

Dr. Jack touched his moustache and smiled. "I think she's asleep now," he said. "I suggest you undress her and get her to bed."

The two men left, and Maria heard them thumping down the stairs. She looked at Terry and saw that her eyes had closed and her lashes lay softly on her cheeks. She undressed her carefully and turned out the light. The moon was shining on the bed. She kissed her daughter on the forehead and lowered the shade before she left.

In her own room it was dark, and she felt her way by touch to the window and kneeled down, resting her arms on the window sill. She leaned her cheek on her bare arms and smelled the air from the lake. It was cool and sweet. She listened to the night song of the katydids and watched the cotton clouds crossing the track of the moon for many minutes in a drowsy tired way until suddenly she pushed herself to her feet and switched on the light by her bed and saw that it was after nine o'clock. She looked at his suitcase already packed and standing in the corner, and she thought to herself, "He'll have to leave soon," as she walked around the end of the bed and went to her closet.

She changed from her rumpled yellow dress to her nightgown and sat in front of her dressing table to do her hair. She pulled out the pins and raised both arms with elbows high and parted the thick black hair so half of it hung over one shoulder, and then she began to brush it. She lifted her silver brush in a steady rhythm and pulled it through her hair, brushing it down from her scalp so she could feel the tingling of her skin and the soft resisting strength of her hair. She had counted fifty strokes on one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

side and was starting on the other when she heard the sound of footsteps coming up the stair. She let her hands drop in her lap and looked at herself in the mirror. She saw her skin shining like ivory and her dark eyes as large and clear as those of a child, and she knew she was waiting for him and must think of him. She knew he would come and get his suitcase and leave, and nothing she could do would stop him. She was filled with longing and dread and shame, and she had a sudden impulse to jump up and lock the door to keep him out, but she dropped her head on one side and sat with her hands in her lap and waited.

When he came in he looked at her with surprise. "Why the nightgown?" he asked. "Are you going to bed?"

"Why not? I'm dead tired, and you're about to leave." She glanced at the face of the clock. "In fact, you have to go right now." She stood up in a businesslike manner and went to the window. "Where's your taxi?" she asked as she peered down on the moonlit road.

"I cancelled it."

"You what?"

"I changed my mind. I'm not taking the train. I'm staying."

"What for?"

"Now, Maria, that's a funny thing to ask me. Don't you want me to stay?"

"No." She stood before him with her bare arms crossed and trembling. She squeezed the flesh of her arms with her fingers as she spoke. "No, I don't want you to stay. I've had enough of this. If you're going, go ahead and leave. Why should you stay tonight when nothing would shake you this afternoon? Am I different? Have I changed?"

"That isn't the point, Maria. I can't leave now with Terry this way."

"Oh no you don't," she cried. "It's not as easy as that. I won't have you staying because of Terry. This marriage is between you and me and no one else. If you're going, go."

"You're being unreasonable, Maria. This has nothing to do with us. Terry needs me—"

"Rubbish," she said. "I can take care of her without your help."

Without another word Horace lifted his bulging suitcase to the bed and snapped up the catches with a click. The two halves

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the suitcase fell open, and he began to lift out his folded shirts.

"What are you doing?" Maria glanced at the clock. "You'll miss the train. Do you hear me, Horace? You'll miss the train."

He went on unpacking without looking in her direction. She saw that his jaw was clamped in a familiar expression of blind masculine stubbornness that she detested and feared, and for a moment she almost gave up in defeat, but she didn't move, and gradually she began to feel that this was a moment of immense importance. She breathed heavily as she watched his hands, and suddenly without thinking she reached out and grabbed one of his wrists.

"Stop it," she cried. "Stop it at once. You have no right to behave this way. Get out. Do you understand? Get out."

He slowly uncurled her fingers from his wrist.

"You bully—" she whispered fiercely.

"Maria, you're being hysterical. You're acting like a child."

"A child? Do I deserve that, Horace? Do I deserve that after this afternoon?"

"No," he said, "you don't." He looked at her with his grave serious eyes. "I should thank you instead, shouldn't I? It showed great courage and tremendous nerve to do what you did. Not one woman in a thousand would have done it. You were magnificent," he said. He paused and sat down on the bed, crossing his knees. She hoped he was going to talk to her truthfully now and tell her about the girl so she could forgive him. "You were magnificent," he said, "but you were a damned fool."

"A fool? Why?"

"For taking an unnecessary risk—for needlessly exposing yourself to danger. What do you know about snakes? How did you know there weren't a dozen more behind him? It's a miracle you're here now."

"Needlessly exposing myself? What else could I do? I had to save your life."

"Listen, Maria, whatever anyone else may think, let's get this straight between us. You didn't have to save my life. I had my knife in my hand."

"You didn't even see him. You didn't know he was there."

"Of course I did, but I was too busy to bother with him as long as he stayed out of range."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What are you telling me, Horace? What are you trying to prove?"

"That you ought to stay out of danger when you see it. It's not your business to be strong."

"I don't care. I'd do it again."

"That's the trouble. You don't know where to stop any more."

"I'm glad I don't."

"You're glad; you're proud; you're headstrong. What's happened to your balance, Maria? We used to work together. Now you make plans behind my back and reach decisions without my knowledge, and I don't like it. I don't like it."

"Oh, Horace, the nerve of you! When I do something any normal person would be grateful for you call me a fool. You get on your high horse and tell me I'm too strong. Who made me strong? Who made me have to be strong to protect myself? No, Horace, it won't do. I'm an easy-going woman, but the time has come to be honest. I can't live this way any longer. I want to live in peace. I like comfort. I like to be liked. I like to feel pride in what I do and have my friends admire me for it. I like to have a good marriage, a fine home, healthy children. I like to know why I'm here and what I'm doing." She swept her hair back from her face. "I can't be happy without these things, but I can't be happy with them if they're all I have. And that's all you leave me, Horace—the appearance of things. My affection annoys you—my love is unwanted. I'm ashamed when I think how—"

"Maria—"

"Don't interrupt me. You're going to listen to me if it's the last thing you do. I'm sick of all this sham, and I'm going to say what I feel. I hate you. I do. I hate you for deceiving me with this girl. I hate you because you are pompous and self-satisfied and full of airs and attitudes. I hate you because you were once the sweet sensitive boy I married, and you've become coarse and—"

"What girl?" He rose from the bed. "Deceiving you with what girl?"

She stared at him as he approached her. "You know what girl," she said as he loomed over her. "That red headed girl in Philadelphia—your mistress."

"Who told you I had a mistress?"

"Do you deny it?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Absolutely."

"Oh, Horace," she sighed. "It's no use lying. Too many people have seen you with her."

"A lot of gossips," he said. "Why do you listen?"

"But there is a girl. You don't deny that."

"Yes, there is. Her name is Suzanne. She's the daughter of an old friend of mine in the export business who sent her over from France on a visit. I've been entertaining her, and I suppose I've been seen. But there's no harm in it, Maria. She's a fine girl—the kind of girl I hope Terry will be."

"You make it sound so terribly innocent," she said. "Am I supposed to believe that you were leaving me tonight to entertain the daughter of a friend?"

"You can believe what you like, but she's not my mistress."

"I have only your word for it."

"Isn't that enough?"

"Once it was." She paused and suddenly shivered in the cold breeze from the window. She could hear his patient breathing as he stood before her, and she wanted to touch him, to reach out and stop the words from his mouth and rest her cheek on his shoulder. She wanted his strength and his love and his care. "Oh, Horace," she cried, "what has happened to us? Why have we failed? Is it my fault? We didn't start out this way."

"It's not your fault or anybody's, Maria. Don't talk that way. We haven't failed and we aren't going to fail." He stopped and seemed unable to go on. He pulled the lobe of his ear, and as she waited she began to realize that this was the only apology she was going to get and that he was as incapable of asking forgiveness as he was of knowing he needed it. She shivered again in the cold air pouring in the window. She looked out at the night and saw a storm was coming. The clouds had swept down from the north and fanned out over the entire sky, covering the stars and the moon with a thick dappled net of gray and black. As she watched she saw the great silver globe of the moon sail out across a clear place and hang motionless and supreme for an instant before it disappeared again in the gloom.

"I'm cold," she said. "I wish you'd close the window, Horace. It sticks, and I can't make it work."

"Certainly," he said. She saw him turn and fumble with the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pins that held it up. He heaved and tugged without success. "Damn," he said suddenly, pulling his hand away.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Nothing. A little scratch."

"Let me see it."

"There's no use fussing about it, Maria. I'll get some iodine and—"

As he brushed by her she reached quickly for his hand. "Wait," she said. "I want to see." She lifted his finger and looked at the red gash in the meaty part of the thumb. A small trickle of blood was on his palm. The sight of it raised in her heart the same unreasoning fear as the afternoon, a fear of danger and death and being alone, and she pressed his hand to her mouth and sucked it, tasting the salty tang of his blood until the flow was stanched and done. "Now," she said, "you be careful. You're too important to me. Do you hear?"

"Why?" he asked.

"Why what?"

"Why am I important to you?"

"Oh, Horace, don't be silly. You're my husband, the only one I've got. Who could be more important?"

"Don't chatter, Maria."

She felt the edge in his voice. Something had touched and quickened him.

"What do you want me to say?" she asked. "Shall I say you're important to me because you're a good father to my children and a good provider or because I like the way you manage things? Shall I say it's because you're considerate of me? Shall I say it's because I'm lonely without you and need your strength? All of these are part of it, but none of them are all of it. Something else has happened, something strange. You're me now and I'm you. I don't know how to say it, but I have no life without you even if I go on living. Do you understand?"

"Almost."

"I wonder if you do or if any man can. It's so easy to say I love you and so hard to know why. I loved you in one way when we were married and in another way when the children came. Now I love you in still another way, although I don't understand it." Her voice was more tender as she continued. "Because I do love

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you, Horace, and I'm not so lost and confused and tied up that I can't feel it and say it. I love you—and always have and always will—no matter what you do."

"Thank you, Maria."

"But it isn't only love I mean because love needs two people and you're me now. Do you understand? You're me now. Whatever you do that gives you pleasure gives me pleasure, and whatever you do that hurts you hurts me too. If you go I go with you; if you stay I stay by your side." She hesitated and looked at him. "And if you do anything to hurt me it hurts me twice as bad because it's as if I hurt myself, and there's no reason for that, no sense. Do you see?"

"Yes," he said, and she felt his hand touch hers.

"Have I answered your question?"

"You've more than answered it, Maria." He squeezed her fingers and his eyes were shining in the semi-darkness of the room as he stood near and looked down on her. "I've seen something that I thought was lost, and I feel better—I feel much better—I feel as if I was coming up from under water. If I've hurt you I—"

"Under water!" She laughed and quickly raised his hand and pressed it against her cheek. "What an idea! Horace, you're sweet."

"I'm serious, Maria."

"I'm sure you are."

"It's astonishing how stupid I've—"

"Sh-h-h," she whispered. "Don't say any more. Just come here."

She felt his arms around her and felt his whole body pressed against hers as she rested her cheek on his shoulder. "There," she murmured, closing her eyes. She breathed deeply as she felt the roughness of many months smoothing out inside her. She sighed and held him close in her arms, feeling happy to return to this shoulder on which she leaned. It was her refuge that she'd lost for so long and needed so badly. She needed it now because of Terry and would need it again in days to come, happy days or days of trouble, wedding days or days of death. She prayed that she would never be left alone again and that when she died he would be there to bury her. He seemed to sense these thoughts for he squeezed her gently and stroked her hair. When she felt the strength of his arms and back and could hear his heart pumping, vital and alive, she felt her own heart fill with peace at last.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IRMA BRANDEIS

Dante's Canzone I

Sestina to the "stony" lady, Pietra

To the short day and the great wheel of shade
I have come now, and to the blanching hills
and time that dims the color of the grass;
but my desire does not spring less green,
such is its rooting in that rugged stone
that speaks and hears as though it were a woman.

Equally changeless is this new-fledged woman,
this frozen thing, like snow that lies in shade:
for she is as insensible as stone
to the sweet season that renews the hills,
warming and turning them from white to green
and covering them with little flowers and grass.

When her fair head is garlanded with grass
she banishes from mind all other women;
for such the mingling of her gold and green
that Love comes seeking harbor in their shade
and binds me fast among the little hills
with fetters durable as mortared stone.

Her beauties have more power than precious stone;
the blow she strikes cannot be healed by grass;
though I have fled through plains and over hills
seeking some place of refuge from this woman,
her light is such it does not suffer shade
from mountain or from wall or fronded green.

I have beheld her sometimes dressed in green—
and fair enough to wake even in stone
the love I suffer for her very shadow—
and longed to woo her in a field of grass
(finding her deep in love as any woman)
enclosed on every side by lofty hills.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But we shall see the streams ascend the hills
before this wood, tender with youth, and green,
kindles to flame in manner of a woman
for me, who would endure sleeping on stone
all my life long, and who would dine on grass
if I might look where her dress throws its shadow.

Let but the hills cast down a darker shadow,
this youthful woman masks it in her green
as one might make a stone vanish in grass.

RUTH FAINLIGHT

Ultimate Day

Frail artefact, the gold-leaf bracken,
Tenuous as flame in sunlight,
Cuts stark against mouldering ditches,
The shivering ghost of the summer.

Sole marks of distance in a flat land,
Haystacks age into royal purple.

This ultimate day, colour of copper
And fire, burning haulm of autumn,
Is the dying throb of fertility's pulse.
Tomorrow the coldness will burst
In barbaric panoply over the marshes.
Steel: iron; weapons of death and of winter.

A Forecast: To R.

All sights, all books, and each event, however small,
Offer me proof. I see you then, in ten years time,
As urban and as empty as the rest;
Those whom now you fear.

Doubtless some work will sell.
Moderately comfortable, you will have a small flat,
A gelded kitten, books, reproductions,
And a clever lover.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Safe contraception will keep you from harm.
At evening, you will chat brightly and tightly at your club,
And listen to the pianist, blinded with cynicism,
Singing of passion

Which you will dutifully mime later that night
(For a healthy sex life is very necessary).
In ten years time you will hardly ever recall
Or even regret

The pungent smoke of the branches we burned,
Eucalyptus, mimosa; frogs bleating at night from the slime
Or gaily leaping from the pump into the morning water;
The oil and the wine.

WILLIAM ALFRED

The Double

On this birdless street without a tree,
One April afternoon near three,
I met a man with flung-out hands
Who danced a kind of tight-rope dance.
"I was taught," he said, "I must choose life.
That's why I dance on the blade of this knife."
What knife? I asked. I see none here.
He smiled and said, "No need to fear.
You will fall if you keep shaking.
We dance on no knife but of our own making."
We? I said. "Oh, yes," said he,
On this birdless street without a tree.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EARL MINER

Pound, *Haiku* and the Image

EZRA POUND'S interest in Japanese poetry has long been acknowledged, but only as an eccentric sort of literary relation which has little understandable connection with his critical theory or his poetry. This study of his interest in *haiku* aims at a partial explanation of his Japanese studies, to show that they are not the poor cousins among his literary relations, but rather enjoy a prominent place alongside Latin and Provençal poetry. Starting with a brief explanation of *haiku*, I hope to show how this one form of Japanese poetry has influenced Pound's theories of poetic imagery, and has offered him techniques which have exfoliated into all his writing.

Haiku (alternatively called *hokku* and *haikai*) is a short Japanese poetic form which developed about the middle of the seventeenth century. It consists of seventeen syllables in three lines of five, seven, and five syllables—the classical rhythm of Japanese poetry. Each *haiku* must concern itself, preferably by implication, with a season of the year. Since the Japanese are intimately familiar with the flora and the fauna of each season, and since each reference to a plum tree in blossom or to a crying pheasant is bound up with centuries of religious symbolism and poetic practice, this "rule" of *haiku* is anything but arbitrary and constraining. In order to transcend the narrow limits of their form, Japanese poets have evolved a style of condensation, ellipsis, suggestion, image and symbol, and echoing of well-known older poems, characteristics of style which present a texture more tightly woven than the most eccentric metaphysical conceit. The possibility of *haiku* being easily understood by someone unfamiliar with the language and the culture is obviously remote, and yet if what *haiku* was *thought* to be was imitated and promulgated, who may sneer? No matter how many books may be filled with comment on Virgil or Ovid misunderstood in the middle ages, or the metaphysicals and *haiku* misapprehended in our own day, the point is that significant poetry has often resulted from such partial understanding.

Since it may be true in a sense that "*haiku* misunderstood" is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one key to our understanding of Pound's theories regarding the image and to some of his poetry, it may repay us to subject a typical *haiku* to close analysis. I shall use one to which Pound refers, first translating it literally, then somewhat more freely, and then explaining how the poem expresses its meaning. The *haiku* in question is an early one which, in its technique of word-play (or *kake-kotaba*), retains vestiges of pre-*haiku* techniques. The poem was written by Moritake (1472-1549). We may read it:

Rakka-eda ni	*To the branch of falling flowers*
Kaeru to mireba:	*Seems to return (a flower):*
Kochō kana.	*A small butterfly.*

Or we may read it, again using English punctuation which does not exist in the original:

Rakka eda ni	*To the branch a fallen flower*
Kaeru; to mireba	*Returns; when I look,*
Kochō kana.	*It is a small butterfly.*

The second reading depends upon our separating the compound, *rakka-eda,* and our reading the syntax of the second line differently. Both readings must be understood:

Petals return unto the branch
Of falling flowers: returning I see
A fluttering butterfly.

The flowers, that is, the cherry blossoms, are past their prime, and are falling, but as the poet watches them flutter down it seems that some of the petals are flying back to the branch. He discovers that he is watching a butterfly. Cherry blossoms are the glory of spring and the symbol of delicate natural beauty; it is pathetic that they must fall. However, they are replaced in the natural order by the butterfly, which brings promises of summer and other kinds of beauty. From the poet's delightful confusion of flower and butterfly we know that the cherry blossoms must be white to be mistaken for a butterfly, and that the butterfly must indeed be lovely if it can be mistaken for cherry blossoms, which are of such surpassing beauty that the *haiku* poet needs refer to them only as "flowers" to be understood.

If we examine the symbols still further, we see that in a sense the poet did see the flowers return to the bough. He has witnessed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one of nature's metamorphoses; the flowers fell, and arose, so to speak, in a new incarnation. Beauty of one kind passes by changing into beauty of another form. Fundamentally, then, this poem rests upon Buddhist assumptions concerning nature: all natural beauty is transitory and fleeting, but the principle of beauty lives on in the everchanging, ever constant metamorphoses of the seasons. Moritake delineates both constancy and change; for the Buddhist the two are polar principles which depend upon each other for their existence.

The assonance and consonance of the poem are difficult to explain to the reader who is unfamiliar with Japanese and who is used to reading poetry based on accent or stress. However, what may strike the English reader is what interested Pound, namely, the employment of the imagery. We are presented first with the image of the petals returning to the branch, and then we are suddenly asked to change the image to the little flight of the butterfly. Having no understanding of the language, and little knowledge of the culture, Pound's understanding of *haiku* was confined to the imagistic technique, and to the condensation and suggestiveness which are so much a part of the method of *haiku*.

There is no reason for thinking that Pound knew anything about Japanese poetry before he joined the Poet's Club of T. E. Hulme and F. S. Flint just before the first World War. But once Hulme and Flint had shown Pound the way, once they had shown him the value of the contemporary French poets and introduced him to *haiku*, Pound was soon a more eager student than they, and he announced his "discovery" to the readers of poetry on both sides of the Atlantic.

His interest in *haiku* was not clear immediately, because he was busy at the time studying French poetry and criticism, but it is possible to reconstruct the development of his interest. He must have learned about *haiku* from Hulme and Flint, who, with the other members of the Poet's Club, were writing imitations of *haiku* and of *tanka*, the thirty-one syllable form. The degree of respect these men had for Japanese poetry can be seen in Flint's account, "The History of Imagism," in *The Egoist* for 1 May 1915:

> I had been advocating in the course of a series of articles on recent books of verse a poetry in *vers libre*, akin in spirit to the Japanese.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But it was more than a spiritual kinship which the early Imagists desired, for as Flint writes a little later in the article:

> We proposed at various times to replace [conventional verse] by pure *vers libre*; by the Japanese tanka and haikai.

Fortunately for our archaeological desires to dig up the sources and dates of his discovery, it is true that in general French translators and critics called *haiku, haikai,* while the English chose the other alternative term, *hokku.* Since Pound talks of *hokku,* we may be reasonably sure that after the introduction to Japanese poetry at the meetings of the Poet's Club, he read about *haiku* in the writings of the English commentators and translators.

The evidence suggests that Pound became interested in *haiku* about 1912. For one thing, the first issue of *Poetry* (October, 1912) carried as its first specimen of the work of Ezra Pound a poem called, "To Whistler, American." His homage to his fellow-expatriate's fame in introducing Japanese art to England was overlooked at the time because of the attack he made on American Philistinism. But he was too good a teacher not to repeat an important point, and in his biography, "Edward Wadsworth, Vorticist," in *The Egoist* for 1 June 1914, he repeated what he had said in the poem, and this time there was little possibility of missing the point:

> I trust that the gentle reader is accustomed to take pleasure in "Whistler and the Japanese." Otherwise he had better stop reading my article until he has treated himself to some further draughts of education.
>
> From Whistler and the Japanese, or Chinese, the "world," that is to say, the fragment of the English-speaking world that spreads itself into print, learned to enjoy "arrangements" of colours and masses.

Ezra Pound would hardly have considered a taste for things Japanese to be *that* necessary unless he had been immersed in Japanese art and poetry for some time.

My phrase, "Japanese art and poetry," is important here. Europe was excited about Japanese prints, lacquerware, and pottery long before it knew anything about the poetry. Almost always the poet came to know the prints before the poetry, and this priority meant that his ideas about the nature of Japanese poetry

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were shaped, probably unconsciously, by his previous impressions of the woodblock print. What this meant for Pound and the other Imagists (except, perhaps, for H. D.) is that those who formed their theories of Imagism by taking into account Japanese art and poetry commonly regarded the image in a pictorial, or at least in a visual sense. This usually ruled out a conception of the image as an impression of any of the other senses, and also precluded using the term to describe any merely metaphorical figure. Pound's interest in "Whistler and the Japanese," in Wadsworth, in the sculptor, Gaudier-Brzeská, and indeed in the general state of European art suggests that his concept of imagery is largely pictorial. This suggestion is strengthened by his writings on the image, and confirmed by the most important evidence, his own poetry. Of course, other elements than the Japanese contributed to the general interest in imagistic writing. However, I believe that the available evidence, which we shall examine shortly, will show that Pound, at least, used "Japanese art and poetry" as starting points and points of reference in developing his theories of the image.

We have Pound's own words to attest to his absorption in *haiku* about 1912. Writing of "Vorticism" in the 1 September 1914 issue of *The Fortnightly Review*, he told how *haiku* entered into the process of composition of one of his best known poems:

> Three years ago [1911] in Paris I got out of a "metro" train at La Concorde, and saw suddenly a beautiful face and another and another . . . and I tried all that day for words for what that had meant for me . . . And that evening . . . I found suddenly the expression . . . not in speech but in sudden splotches of colour. It was just that—a "pattern" or hardly a pattern if by pattern you mean something with a repeat in it. But it was a word, the beginning for me of a new language in colour. . . .
>
> I wrote a thirty-line poem and destroyed it because it was what we call work of the second intensity. Six months later I made a poem half that length; a year later [1912] I made the following hokku-like sentence.
>
> "The apparition of these faces in a crowd;
> Petals on a wet, black bough."

This is not a "hokku-like sentence" because the poem is short, or because the image is vaguely Japanese. Pound's indebtedness to *haiku* is as definite as it is profound:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> The Japanese have had the same sense of exploration. They have understood the beauty of this sort of knowing [that is, "imagistic" as opposed to "lyric" writing] . . . The Japanese have evolved the form of the hokku.
>
> "The fallen blossom flies back to its branch:
> A butterfly."

"That is the substance of a very well-known hokku," Pound adds. It is the one whose "substance" I have translated and explained earlier. He went on to define the technique which he had adopted:

> The "one image poem" is a form of super-position, that is to say it is one idea set on top of another. I found it useful for getting out of the impasse in which I had been left by my metro emotion. I wrote a thirty line poem, and destroyed it. . . .

This super-pository technique clearly evolved out of Pound's knowledge of Japanese poetry, for he thought that he was imitating or utilizing the technique of *haiku*. Actually he was using only one of the methods which *haiku* employs to overcome the limitations of its brevity. From one point of view, this leaves him open to the charge of inadequate understanding of Japanese poetry; however, if we are less pedantically inclined, we may be happy with one of the rare glimpses we have into the creative process, as the poet seizes upon his subject, shapes it according to a technique learned from another literature—a literature which ceases to be foreign because it has a sudden relevance to his poem—and then presents us with the finished object of art.

Apparently Pound's account of his writing of "In a Station at the Metro" and other such poems, and his advocacy of the "form of super-position" did not pass without comment from his fellow poets, for in the same article he wrote:

> I am often asked whether there can be a long imagiste or vorticist poem. The Japanese, who evolved the hokku, evolved also the Noh plays. In the best "Noh" the whole play may consist of one image. I mean it is gathered about one image. Its unity consists in one image, enforced by movement and music. I see nothing against a long vorticist poem.

The extraordinary thing about the programme or manifesto which he presents for Imagism ("Imagisme," he says, is the poetic branch of Vorticism) is that its techniques are "Japanese" and its justifi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cations are the excellences of Japanese poetry. The question of the effect which Pound's study of the *Nō* had on his poetry, and later on the plays of William Butler Yeats, is not within the scope of this discussion. But the alerted reader may find the technique of the unifying image in the *Cantos*, and may also be interested in speculating on the relation which it bears to the concern of T. S. Eliot and other writers with finding adequate symbols or a "myth" to organize the refractory poetic materials presented by the modern world and to "inform" them with meaning.

Before turning to the question which is after all the most interesting and the most important, the question of Pound's use and modification of the technique of super-position in his poetry, we ought to consider a little further the role which *haiku* played in the formulation of his theories about Imagism. In the description of his experience in the "metro," he speaks of the loveliness of "that sudden emotion" and the later discovery of "the expression . . . not in speech but in sudden splotches of colour." This account may be compared with his famous definition of the image in *Poetry* for March, 1913 as

> an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time . . . It is the presentation of such an image which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art.

If the chronology we have been following is correct, and if there is a justification for believing that this definition of the image is indebted to Japanese poetry, then the date of the definition in *Poetry* would come after his discovery of *haiku*, but before his coming into possession of the Japanese and Chinese manuscripts from Mrs. Ernest Fenollosa in early 1914. This is relevant because the definition of the image quoted above does not suggest the kind of image which he describes later as the unifying element in a long poem. That is, it seems likely that Pound's often quoted definition of the image is based upon his enthusiasm for *haiku*, and not upon other reading in far eastern poetry, and perhaps only secondarily upon the theories of the earlier Imagists—F. S. Flint, Richard Aldington, and H. D. We can also see the continuity of the development of Pound's theories concerning the image. The definition which was first stated in terms of an instantaneous

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

perception transcending the boundaries of time and space (the "*haiku* image," as we may call it) is subsequently broadened to mean an image or metaphor about which the meaning of a longer poem might cohere (the "*Nō* image"). Also, given this modified meaning, we can see how ready his mind was to receive Fenollosa's theories concerning the ideogrammatic nature of the Chinese written character and its advantages for poetry. I feel strongly that the impression many people have of Pound's thought as a helter-skelter chasing after this or that interesting discovery distorts the continuous and essentially integrated quality of his artistic theory and his poetry. The development which we have noted here could probably be paralleled in a study of the uses he has made of the techniques of Browning or of the Provençal poets.

Lustra, which appeared in London in 1916, was the first volume to contain the results of Pound's discovery of the super-pository image technique. There are other techniques—many poems resemble those in *Ripostes* four years earlier, some are after H. D.'s manner, a few resemble Biblical forms—but the super-pository technique is very much in evidence, and we can see the first modifications which it was to undergo. "In a Station at the Metro" is duly included. So also are "L'Art, 1910"—

> *Green arsenic smeared on an egg-white cloth,*
> *Crushed strawberries! Come, let us feast our eyes.*

—and "Women Before a Shop"—

> *The gew-gaws of false amber and false turquoise*
> *attract them.*
> *'Like to like nature': these agglutinous yellows!*

—two poems which had appeared in the first issue of *BLAST* on 20 June 1914 as examples of Vorticist poetry.

We should note that "L'Art, 1910" has reversed the technique of "In a Station at the Metro" by putting the image *before* the non-imagistic invitation to feast our eyes. The technique of super-position is also slightly modified in "Women Before a Shop." The last three words are super-posed on the preceding, and in a sense, the body of the poem is super-posed on the title, which, like the title of many abstract paintings, is necessary to give us an idea of the meaning of the "picture" as a whole.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An example of the simpler use of the technique can be found in "April":

Three spirits came to me
And drew me apart
To where the olive boughs
Lay stripped upon the ground:
Pale carnage beneath bright mist.

The technique is used even more strikingly, with the last line set off, in "Gentildonna":

She passed and left no quiver in the veins, who now
Moving among the trees, and clinging in the air
she severed,
Fanning the grass she walked on then, endures:

Grey olive leaves beneath a rain-cold sky.

And again, in the last line of "Dum Capitolium Scandet":

How many will come after me singing as well as I sing,
none better:
Telling the heart of their truth as I have taught
them to tell it;
Fruit of my seed,
O my unnameable children.
Know then that I loved you from afore-time,
Clear speakers, naked in the sun, untrammeled.

"Alba" shows how the technique may be used at its simplest:

As cool as the pale wet leaves of
lily-of-the-valley
She lay beside me in the dawn.

The image appears first in "The Bath Tub," and is followed by the "expository" element:

As a bath tub lined with white porcelain,
When the hot water gives out or goes tepid,
So is the slow cooling of our chivalrous passion,
O my much praised but-not-altogether-satisfactory lady.

This short poem is all the more interesting for its humor, which seemingly parodies the super-pository image technique; for its elaborate Biblical simile which the Imagists were fond of using

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in their love poetry; and for the comic use of the language of Pound's Provençal love poetry.

"The Coming of War: Actaeon" shows how a longer poem might be written by inter-weaving the "expository" element with apposite images:

An image of Lethe,
and the fields
Full of faint light
but golden,
Grey cliffs,
and beneath them
A sea
Harsher than granite,
unstill, never ceasing;
High forms
with the movement of gods,
Perilous aspect;
And one said:
'This is Actaeon.'
Actaeon of golden greaves!
Over fair meadows,
Over the cool face of the field,
Unstill, ever moving
Hosts of an ancient people,
The silent cortege.

Some of Ezra Pound's poems in the Chinese manner are composed in the same *haiku* technique. A very beautiful example (which also suggests "Gentildonna": I can suggest no priority) is the justly famous "Liu Ch'e":

The rustling of the silk is discontinued,
Dust drifts over the court-yard,
There is no sound of foot-fall, and the leaves
Scurry into heaps and lie still,
And she the rejoicer of the heart is beneath them:

A wet leaf that clings to the threshold.

Here Pound has outdone himself by super-posing on a series of delicately suggestive images a still more beautiful one.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Another "Chinese" poem which suggests the *haiku* technique is "Fan-Piece, for her Imperial Lord":

O fan of white silk,
clear as frost on the grass-blade,
You are also laid aside.

An analysis of this brief poem may be of some help if the earlier analysis of a *haiku* is borne in mind. The comparison of Pound's technique with that of the Japanese ought to show the nature of his use and his misunderstanding of Japanese techniques.

In the first place, it seems more than a coincidence that just as a *haiku* consists of seventeen syllables, this poem is made up of seventeen words, and these in the *haiku* pattern of five, seven, and five in three lines. Secondly, we have a modified version of Pound's "form of super-position" here. The "narrative," if explicit statement in so short a poem as this may be called that, is, "O fan of white silk . . . You are also laid aside." Besides this "narrative" we have a super-posed, or rather inter-posed, image of frost on a grass blade.

The title tells us that the poem is one sent as a message by a wife, concubine, or mistress to an Imperial Prince, her "Lord." The woman shows her tact and restraint by addressing the complaint to the fan instead of to her Master. The nature of her complaint is made clear only in the last line with the shock of the adverb: "You are *also* laid aside." We understand by the "also" that the woman has been deserted or forgotten.

We must not overlook the importance of the super-posed image to this theme. The resemblance of the silk of the fan to the frost on the grass is not one only of color. The point is that the clear frost melts quickly in the morning sun, that beautiful fans are used by imperial princes for only a short time, and that even a woman's beauty will serve as an attraction for only a season.

Certainly Pound has achieved a poetic success in short compass in this lament or complaint. Imagery, rhythms, and suggestion fuse to give a unified, moving poem. How then does this poem differ from *haiku*? First, *haiku* are nature poems, and exclude such topics as love complaints, which are considered the proper province of thirty-one syllable *waka*. Second, Pound's suggestion of the season (frost suggests autumn) lacks the over-riding importance

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of nature which is characteristic of *haiku*. He might have made his point of evanescence with the usual Buddhist symbol of dew. Had he done this (and had he been writing the poem in Japanese) such an image would have extended the meaning of the poem symbolically to the metaphysical realm where the transience of all earthly things is both deplored and scorned. This leads us to the third difference. The meaning of "Fan-Piece, for her Imperial Lord" is restricted to what might be called psychological and esthetic truth, while Moritake's poem about the cherry blossoms and the butterfly uses a religious symbolism which gives it a more profound universality. There are also differences in the use of language which may not be discussed here. What Pound's poem "lacks," and indeed what it does not pretend to have, is a centuries-old tradition of nature symbolism and a poetic practice to express it, as well as a language highly developed for brief, suggestive, and allusive poetry. But this is not surprising. What does amaze us is the degree to which Pound has emulated the techniques of *haiku* and the skill with which he has reproduced the tone of melancholy and restrained plaintiveness which is common in oriental poetry but rare in our own.

Besides these poems there are many other short poems which embody the same technique—"The Encounter," "Shop Girl," "Tame Cat," the concluding stanza of "Mauberley," "Fish and Shadow," etc.

However, we ought to turn away from the shorter poems and investigate Pound's use of the technique in longer efforts. T. S. Eliot thought that although much of "Near Perigord" echoed Browning, in the last seven lines only Pound's voice is audible.

> *There shut up in his castle, Tairiran's,*
> *She who had nor ears nor tongue save in her hands,*
> *Gone—ah, gone—untouched, unreachable!*
> *She who could never live save through one person,*
> *She who could never speak save to one person,*
> *And all the rest of her a shifting change,*
> *A broken bundle of mirrors . . . !*

It is the voice of Ezra Pound, certainly, but in his use in the last line of the super-pository technique to define the meaning of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

poem in one distinct image there is what may be called a Japanese accent.

Like *The Waste Land*, to which they are comparable in many ways, the *Cantos* are made up of many diverse poetic elements. Our present concern is in the use which Pound made of *haiku* and of the super-pository image technique, although any full study of Pound's use of Japanese poetry would include an examination of elements of *Nō* which are to be found in the poem. Generally speaking, Pound uses the super-pository technique in two ways, either as a striking ending for a canto, or, more commonly, within the canto to express with an image what has gone before or what follows directly, a device we have noted in the shorter poems. Most examples of the use of the technique which he adapted from *haiku* are found in the early *Cantos*, before the prevailing theme becomes the evil of usury and certain forms of government, or in the more lyrical *Pisan Cantos*.

Since it is difficult to make very much sense of the cantos without quoting a whole canto as context or without providing a great deal of explanation, I shall try to choose examples from passages which are relatively clear. Pound uses the technique both within Canto XVII and, more strikingly, to end it:

> Thither Borso, when they shot the barbed arrow at him,
> And Carmagnola between the two columns,
> Sigismundo, after that wreck in Dalmatia.
> Sunset like the grasshopper flying.

The canto which makes most frequent use of the technique is probably Canto IV. For example, the last line of this passage:

> The dogs leap on Actæon,
> "Hither, hither, Actæon,"
> Spotted stag of the wood;
> Gold, gold, a sheaf of hair,
> Thick like a wheat swath,
> Blaze, blaze in the sun,
> The dogs leap on Actæon.
> Stumbling, stumbling along in the wood,
> Muttering, muttering Ovid:
> "Pergusa . . . pool . . . pool . . . Gargaphia,
> "Pool . . . pool of Salmacis."
> The empty armour shakes as the cygnet moves.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Other examples are to be found in the succeeding sections of the same canto:

> Thus the light rains, thus pours, *e lo soleils plovil*
> The liquid and rushing crystal
> beneath the knees of the gods.
> *Ply over ply, thin glitter of water;*
> *Brook film bearing white petals.*
> The pines at Takasago
> grow with the pines of Isé!
> The water rolls up the bright pale sand in the
> spring's mouth
> "Behold the Tree of the Visages!"
> Forked branch-tips, flaming as if with lotus.
> Ply over ply
> The shallow eddying fluid,
> beneath the knees of the gods.
>
> Torches melt in the glare
> set flame of the corner cook-stall,
> Blue agate casing the sky (as at Gourdon that time)
> the sputter of resin,
> Saffron sandal so petals the narrow foot: Hymenæus Io!
> Hymen, Io Hymenæe! Aurunculeia!
> *A scarlet flower is cast on the blanch-white stone.*

The italicized (English) words show how the technique which began in a two line poem has become adapted for a long poem.

For an example in a later canto, we might choose the following lines from Canto XLVII (the italics are mine):

> By this gate art thou measured
> Thy day is between a door and a door
> Two oxen are yoked for plowing
> Or six in the hill field
> *White bulk under olives,* a score for drawing down stone.

Earlier in the same canto (in the twenty-fifth line) there is the lovely super-pository image—

> But in the pale night the small lamps float seaward,

—which occurs in variation throughout the *Cantos.*

These examples ought to be sufficient to familiarize a reader of Pound's poetry with the technique. If it is possible to generalize, it might be said that this "form of super-position" has been most useful to him in poems and passages which are epigrammatic,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

elegiac, or lyric, although he seems also to have found it useful to gather together, as it were, several lines of narrative and exposition into one apposite image.

What these examples and Pound's criticism show, is that *haiku* has made an important contribution to his theory and practice. It gave him material and examples for much of his theory concerning imagery, a programme or manifesto for poetry and art about the time of the first World War, and, finally, a flexible technique which he called the "form of super-position." It may also be assumed that he was attracted by the suggestive, allusive, condensed, and concrete qualities of Japanese poetry, or he would never have turned to it in the first place. This particular "influence" is so intangible, however, and might have come from such a variety of English and European sources besides Japanese poetry that it is more prudent to say that these qualities would have interested him only because they showed him that many of his own ideas could be embodied in poetry. In this sense, Japanese poetry confirmed what he was already thinking and advocating.

The super-pository image technique is not confined to the limits of the poetry of Ezra Pound, broad as these are. Examples may be found in the poetry of other Imagists over whom Pound had influence—notably Richard Aldington, Amy Lowell, and John Gould Fletcher. The extraordinary aspect of the story of the development and use of this technique is not perhaps the broadcast quality of it in the work of Pound and the other Imagists, but the clarity, the logic, and the assurance with which its author developed and promulgated it from a poetry written in a language he neither read nor spoke. Or perhaps it is still more remarkable that, in many instances, his uses of the technique do actually remind the informed reader of the original form from which the technique was taken, and in some poems there seems to be more of the spirit of Japanese poetry than in the deliberate imitations of *haiku* or *tanka* made by the other Imagists and by poets and poetasters who have been in Japan.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HERBERT GOLD

The New Upper-Middle Soap Opera

(A tribute to Herman Wouk, Sloan Wilson, Cameron Hawley, and makers of fine face-cream everywhere)

A NEW POPULAR novel is abroad in the land. Like many a dull child, it has respectable parents: J. P. Marquand in this generation, William Dean Howells in an earlier one, and so on back. In its present best-selling incarnation, it has found a formula for success to equal Aristotle's stern definition of the nature of tragedy. No longer need a fiction lift its audience to a sense of participation in the life of a man of dignity, faced by responsibility, significant choice, and the flaws of his own humanity. Ambition and desire, the fear of passing away and the hunger for love, the use of intelligence toward a passionate growth—these strong melodies have been reorchestrated by the fabricators of the new upper-middle soap opera, just as the music is eliminated from music on Tin Pan Alley (while preserving a boom of beat) and caffeine is eliminated from coffee by the white-coated scientists (for the sake of those of us who have the jitters because we lack the ability to fulfill ambition and desire).

As we are seen in the upper-middle soap opera, Americans no longer seek the girl, the adventure, the career, or the prize of self. Now we need to get the Belongingness. Groupy man is the New American. Faith, defined as trust in a given society, becomes the prime mover. Plot, a direction of growth in time, a movement made possible by significant risks and commitments, gives way to plot defined as an anthology of cautionary anecdotes. The hero learns just how right it is to be right. Already secure in advance, a reader watches the protagonist join the company of men by the curious process of getting to be at one with the reader's own moral evasions.

In Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, for example, Tom Rath confesses that "Ralph and a good deal of the rest of the world have seemed honest to me ever since I became honest with myself. . . . I've become almost an optimist." The purging of pity and fear is replaced by contented anticipation: "Just wait till you see Gregory Peck getting honest with himself in this one!"

Was tragedy once an occasion for communion, a time for men to join their fellows in a sense of the power and glory of being human? Now a stupor of pleased submission—after a term of grief, savantly drawn out—follows the difficulties put upon this new hero in his world of real quirks and semi-real tribulations. We recognize the true enemies of success, since we have already conquered them our-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

selves: unfortunate accidents or temporary blindness. In this new shape of democracy, we are more than the equal of the heroes of our novels: we are the purged and cured toward whom *they* aspire. They want admittance.

Who are the fashioners of the new soap opera?

Herman Wouk, or Nobody Here But Us Career Sailors; Sloan Wilson, or Tell Your Wife the Truth, Then Wear Even Gray Flannel Lounging Pajamas; Cameron Hawley, or The Passion According to Saint Luce; and a host of less subtle apes of Marquand, or How Sad To Be Sad But How Distinguished.

From these moralists we learn that Queeg wouldn't have been so paranoid, if only that bunch of anarchists and landlubbers had tried to understand Navy tradition and been more sympathetic when he clacked those queegballs. Missus Gray Flannel will understand her hubby's straying, picnicking with the grateful, pneumatic Maria, and fathering a child in Rome—just give her a few pages for being agitated in the suburban garden. The Young Designer, who really has faith in the Company, will always win out over mean, money-loving accountants, partly because he is Close to the Men and partly because his wife marches by his side some of the time. In *Executive Suite* the moment of truth is a moment of sublime obfuscation:

"As her hand touched the offered glass, Mary Walling understood, for one fleeting instant, the miracle of her husband's mind. Now it had happened to her! She knew without knowing why she knew. . . ." Even more stirring, she knows without knowing *what* she knows. But she realizes: "You'll never understand completely . . . . don't try . . . . you'll be happier if you don't . . . . he'll be happier, too." And then they go down "the dark corridor" together.

Despite mechanical construction and brazen moralizing, their thoughts about happiness separated by dot-dot-dot-dot from their thoughts about understanding, these novels are neither crude nor tasteless except in their implications. They are written by intelligent men. There is an educated restraint about their language. They are sincere writers who mean what they say: It's so hard to conform, but do it, do it, *do it*. The simplicity of the message is required by both their own lack of courage and that of the audience, but they are capable of spinning out complications, alternatives, dilemmas, and even the ambiguity of interpretation which passes for artistic quality. This high-type, college-grad, sob-and-smug story, written in the cottony "common style," has the advantage of making stops and starts without ever introducing passion or will. Perfectly planned, destined for the screen, it can be hammered into shape with a whistle and a song in the heart, five or seven or nine pages a day, without ever the terrible interruptions of doubt or drama. When it's time for a nap, the author can stop in the middle of a phrase, never breaking the easy flush and flow of his product:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"He was going to make May his wife." Willy Keith is relieved, also. May has just finished telling him that she has preserved her virginity from the importunities of an orchestra leader, she knows not why, some code or other maybe, just an old-fashioned girl who doesn't go for orchestra leaders. Everyone thinks that the musician has worked his will on May, just because she travels from hotel to hotel with him, but surprise, surprise, he has gnashed his teeth in vain. Willy "did not know what manner of life they could find together, he did not know whether they would be happy, and he did not care now. He was going to make May his wife." In *The Caine Mutiny*, as elsewhere in the woukaday world, heroes do their duty and villains merely wish they could.

The recent history of American literary vogues is an illuminating one. For a time, before World War II, there was the concern about a contracting economy and want in the midst of plenty which generated the proletarian novel. Then came the war and the war novel, in which the same quest for a better world met the rigors of regimentation and the horrors of organized destruction. In both of these periods, the writer reserved for himself the role of a moralist seeking solutions beyond immolation.

But in this new novel, built within a world of terrible beatitudes, a world of contracting freedom and organized satisfactions, the attack is concentrated on the ideals of the earlier writers. The novel of revolt has given way to the obedience novel. It is cornball to be difficult, to grope for more than a few chapters, to seek frontiers and a better life. In the new unfreedom—where all is plentiful but the chance to look and there is nearly full employment for everything but the mind and heart—the only frontier to be reached is that of Adjustment. These new agonists make it to the recruiting office, or if they don't, their authors hold them up to our contempt.

When Marjorie Morningstar attains the suburb, after passing through the crucible of a grotesque Broadway Bohemia, we are directed to cheer her luck for having found the values that the reader has already found. She is happily burned down. She is prematurely gray; presumably she has charcoal gray hair to go with her gray flannel heart. As Diderot says, commenting on the trouble we have in breaking the impulse to love: "Preparations of lead, put to use prudently, may produce good effects, being proper to stifle the venereal appetite." The leaden career of Marjorie, her single transgression justified by frigidity on the occasion, hip-heavy now, a clubwoman, keeping a kosher kitchen, is given us as an exemplary one.

What are the alternatives? The Life of Art (ingredients, in any order: Broadway, cynicism, the rive gauche, sex, hope, and James Joyce) vs. The Life of Life (suburb, bridge and canasta, a husband who is not very tall but very nice).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

II

Probably the most respectable rationale for this new novel occurs in the work of David Riesman, who performed a brilliant metaphorical fix on the American character in *The Lonely Crowd*, and then proceeded, in the books that followed, to define the desirable "autonomous" personality as the one which is free because it accepts its society and chooses "responsibly" within the acceptable. Why persist in protest when we already have everything? Why look when we have found as much as we can consume? Why long for further goods when all the commodities needed for happiness are available to anyone whose credit is unsullied?

And don't be anxiously other-directed, either, Mr. Riesman advises, and we hear a peal from the church tower prompting him: "Think positively, dong, dong."

The autonomous personality also carries a radar which is closely tuned to others, but it makes significant and free choices anyway. They are not the compulsive, driven ones of the old inner-directed style; they are not the sheepish milling in herds of the other-directeds. Most readers of *The Lonely Crowd* felt a certain kinship with Riesman's inner-directed type, and thought that he intended it that way, despite his disavowals. Turns out that no. Further discussion laid down the line. The inner-directed man is a violent, lonely, self-seeking person, tormented by aspiration, withered of the kitchen-warm feelings, and ignorant of the common pleasures.

For Spinoza, human bondage consists in entrapment by the flesh and the material world; true freedom comes of a stoic withdrawal unto those personal values which no earthly misfortune can tarnish. Riesman parodies this typically inner-directed solution to the problem of sustaining the individual spirit in troubled times. The autonomous man seeks to be a part of the levelled culture; it would be neurosis or treason to object. But the autonomous man uses his teevee in a brilliant, supple, imaginative and wide-ranging way. While mere other-directed man watches "I Love Lucy" because everyone is watching "I Love Lucy," the autonomous hero deliberates, investigates, considers, measures, and only then ventures a decision between Channel 4 and Channel 7. And of course, since we expect that he is autonomous enough to be proud of being a man of our time, in the end he will watch "I Love Lucy," too.

But there is always the subtle difference: *He really wanted to.* He drafted himself. And the possibilities of free choice unroll with dizzying challenge during the autonomous evening: beer or gingerale, chocolate ice cream or strawberry, should I take my wife to bed or not.

Novelists are not the original seducers, then. They are accompanied by Karen Horney in psychology, David Riesman in sociology, and Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn in philosophy. All the current close squeezing to belong, to conform, to adjust, to sing praise to what-is in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

America provides the social climate of novels worthy of being serialized in *Life*. While the society reassures itself that all goes for the best, we are just busy little bees, working, leisuring, grouping, rearming, the private agony goes on. What we are and what the world seeks to make of us are continually at war. The adman knows it, the statesman knows it, even Sloan Wilson knows it, though he buzzes in the hive and says, "What a brave bee am I!" Exactly as in radio soap opera, Sloan Wilson allows us our bit of trouble to show us to what extent life can be beautiful. Later. Soon. Just pucker up, button up, and face your duty.

The sophisticates who commit the new soap opera know the people they describe, or at least know their manners, what they drink, how they joke, where they buy their clothes. These novelists have their own goals; they are relieved of the wrenching ambition of Balzac, Tolstoy, or Dostoevski—to make life large. Their task is simply to point the local personnel toward a good life waiting to receive them. You blindfold your people; you turn them around until they are dizzy; you have them stumble awhile; then—since you know where the donkey is—you let them peek under the bandage and pin on the tail. What passes for dramatic growth is the bumping against furniture which dislodges that handkerchief over the eyes. The reader is pleased that his hero has made out, but his pleasure is a smug one. How silly not to have used a finger to pry up the blindfold.

Determined to be a contented cow, such a novelist is bound to give a chalky or over-bland milk. There is nothing to work toward but a job of consolidation. Social protest is an anachronism—the courts take care of injustice. The private risk and chance of trouble are mere neurosis—find yourself an analyst. Significant choice is no longer possible to individuals.

For these autonomous fabricators, everything can be reduced, encompassed, rectified. We will be teased from chapter to chapter by dread that maybe the Regular Navy breeds the wrong kind of paranoid; maybe the man in the gray flannel suit really has chosen a way of life which must leave him unfulfilled—and only Maria, the Roman fantasy-wife, can make him happy in the sack; maybe great corporations are run for profit and not for the benefit of the worker and the customer.

But all is creamy in the end. Those who rebel against Navy spirit are the selfish children of caprice, and an artist is the worst of all. Now that Tom Rath and his wife Understand, they can march on into Connecticut and the house they really want, budgeting a hundred dollars a month to help raise Tom's child in Rome and remembering now to try to Communicate while they're in bed. (Balzac said: Women, when they finally succeed in making a man into a sheep, always tell him that he is a lion with a will of iron.)

And finally, brightest faith of all, it turns out that a furniture com-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pany is really a service and chooses for its next President the man who most desires to Serve. Like Mary Walling, the Company appreciates "the miracle of her husband's mind."

III

Novels always reflect moral purpose. Every novel which takes any permanent hold differs both in goal and perspective from every other novel. We expect these differences, just as we expect each event in a life to change our view of that life. Novel-writing has always been a risky, athletic, and potentially destructive adventure, for just these reasons of uncertainty about what the work will tell us. "Pity this busy monster, manunkind, not."

These new novels also surprise us with their message. There is something new in the type, however—not merely another perspective on the meaning of human life in society. There is a new grayness and dryness, a new limit to the will and intelligence of the novelists. They reduce experience. They shrink; they join with the other shrinkers; this frightened hiving replaces the challenge of individual worth. They put alum on their lips so that they cannot even kiss properly.

A shadow of the athletic striving of the artist as moralist persists, but now the moral purpose becomes that of an exercise in submission. Faith is the famous bird flying in ever-decreasing concentric circles—faith in Faith, not in some bright tradition; the patriotism is hoarse and defensive; groupiness replaces even the bugles of glorious chauvinism. Our doubts are portrayed, sometimes vividly, in the books of Wouk, Wilson, and Hawley. They are answered at the end much in the way of the clever Italian journalists who smuggled honesty into their editorials, marshalling all the arguments against Mussolini, then concluding triumphantly: "Oh yeah? That's what our enemies think."

The journalists deceived only the censors. Not so with Sloan Wilson. He is a believer. After Tom Rath gives his wife the account of his infidelity, he is suddenly that two-headed modern fictional beast, the Honest Man. It can do anything. By the deus ex machina of this abstract, Platonic, "essential" honesty, he is saved for happy commuting despite all the evidence of his experience. Can the heavenly purity of a gray flannel career be corrupted? No! Why not? Because: "That's what our enemies think."

The commuting, business, institutionalized world—apolitical, bored and anxious, with passion the great danger—is questioned with some skill and tension. The affirmation of allegiance to it which follows is so much more reassuring: *He knows, he knows.* Job, rebelling against abomination, raises his head and cries out, "How long, O Lord?" He needs the love of God, God's justice and tenderness, but on his own most demanding terms: for what he has been, is, and can be. The three friends say *Shush!* because Job has no right to challenge the almighty Source of the universe. "Hide yourself, give up," they urge

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him, waving their arms and shaking their beards: "There must be a reason, and if there isn't? Be nice."

He will buy neither the comfort nor the false freedom of pretense. It is not that Job is an anarchic spoiled child. He struggles to take his place among God's children on the terms of his power and virtue as a man. There is belonging and belonging. The road by which we arrive at participation within a group cannot be separated from the quality of this participation. Community is one thing; groupiness is another. Job stands on two feet like a man, with awareness of responsibility, with a capacity to love and respect, with a sense of the value of the individual others. The temporizers band together because they cannot travel alone, and put out their hands not to pray but to lean. Job lives in both pride and piety. The three friends make a world of their fear and cunning. "Why ask for truth or justice?" they say. "Take what you can get and pretend it's what you want. After all, it's what *we* want."

The great novelists have always been Jobs; the new novelists of tremulous adjustment are the three friends: "How long, O Lord, before his wife helps him to understand?" These writers already understand, however, and here in all its simplicity is their moral message:

Virtue consists in a faithful submission, perhaps with understanding and sorrow, to the way things are. The way things are is the best way for things to be—or at least there is nothing better which we can bear to imagine. If you are still troubled, be patient. Have faith. All blessings will come to you, and in decorator colors. The path of righteousness will be made more abundantly clear in the VistaVision version.

As a television editor put it, "No more downbeat dramas! We want happy stories about happy people with happy problems." The ideal type of the happy problem is represented by the issue facing that handsome couple in the automobile advertisement, all gowned and tuxedoed, smiling at each other and wondering what kind of an evening it will be, while the baby-sitter broods benevolently in the background: "Shall we take the Cadillac tonight?"

Answer that question in 100,000 words, man.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOHN HOLLOWAY

New Lines in English Poetry

To THE READER of contemporary verse in England, the almost simultaneous appearance of these three books[1] is a very convenient thing. It serves as a landmark, and the line of poetic movement along which that landmark stands is now hard to miss. "Movement" in fact is just what, over the last three years, this line has come to be called. These three poets are not the only runners: Mr. Kingsley Amis, Mr. John Wain, Mr. Enright and Miss Elizabeth Jennings have already published books of verse (slim volumes by private presses chiefly) along the line too; novels by the first three of these make easily the best-known part (though I think a very distinct part) of the trend; and Mr. Davie's *Purity of Diction in English Verse* is a notable critical contribution. Certainly, the Movement writers toe no rigid party line. Even the three poets under review here diverge a good deal. But: the distinctive group of writers, writing activity over a broad front, critical re-thinking that serves it (and in fact also personal acquaintanceships which lie, one knows, behind it)—to fail, still, to see that something is happening is simply to reveal lack of interest: which is not to pre-judge the value of the "Movement," nor to assert that nothing else is happening.

These three books of verse thus have an interest beyond themselves, a representative interest; because of this, it is worth while, as a preliminary, to note two of the standing conditions which lie behind them. The first emerges if we remember the great post-Eliot paradox of English poetical development: that the *avant-garde*, even while acclaiming him, were in the 1930s producing a public, political Romanticism (for such it was: Auden's "Hearing of harvests rotting in the valleys," Spender thinking "continually of those who were truly great," Day Lewis writing "Do not desire again a Phoenix hour"); and in the 1940s, a private, Dylan Thomas-inspired, Id-Romanticism: Mr. Barker, Mr. Gascoyne and others. But Mr. Davie belongs to a whole generation for which Eliot's verse, his critical writing, Richards, "close reading," and Donne, are poetry's norms. This is the point at which the discussion now starts. To write creatively is to proceed from it.

There is also another factor: less tangible, but probably vital. The poetry of the 1930s may have been left-wing, but it was profoundly upper-class. It reads "you" not "we" (Auden's "On you our interests

[1] BRIDES OF REASON, by *Donald Davie*. Fantasy Press. 6s. THE LESS DECEIVED, by *Philip Larkin*. The Marvell Press. 6s. POEMS, by *Robert Conquest*. Macmillan & Co. Ltd. 10s.6d.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are set/ Your sorrows we shall not forget") like Victorian "Hymns for Working Men." Its chief poets learnt at public (i.e. great upper-class private) schools and taught at preparatory schools. Behind it, at varying degrees of only half-discredited remoteness, stood literary Bohemia or Bloomsbury or the literary country-house weekend—the world to which, though deeply alien to it, Lawrence virtually had to gravitate because it *was* the literary world of his time. The recent social revolution, gentle though real, in England, has changed this. The typical "Movement" writer's childhood background appears to be lower middle-class and suburban (often staunchly non-conformist, often in the industrial or semi-industrial Midlands or North of England). The crucial point is, that he is on the whole staying there. If he is teaching, it is not in an upper-class preparatory school, but in a "red-brick" provincial university. The automatic decanting process into upper-class England has been interrupted. Perhaps it is no longer wanted. If true, this is important: we are witnessing the end of something which has been established ever since the death of Keats and Hazlitt.

These, admittedly, are somewhat long shots. They appear slightly less long when one opens Mr. Davie's book, finds that its first poem is called "Among Artisans' Houses," and discovers that this is no idealistic call across a gap, to the Other Chaps, on a 1930s loud-hailer; but a quiet, respectful noticing, from right close up or even inside, of the exact good and bad in what the 1930s barely had at all—a settled prosperous working-class:

it is
An outcome of the civil sense,
Its small and mean utilities;
A civilization, in its way,
Its rudiments, or its decay.

This first poem of the book well displays Mr. Davie's own background (though he didn't grow up in Plymouth, where it is set), and his concern for the moral realities of conduct, and the unruffled, dry, yet intent regard which he turns on his subject. It deploys, however, only a part of the technical resources in which he can embody his distinctive cast of mind. These include a control of local structure which is executive to a cool yet telling wit:

For such a theme (atrocities) you find
My style, you say, too neat and self-possessed,
I ought to show a more disordered mind.

Such a cool opening to a poem hints that the author holds better cards than he plays. What Eliot (and Donne) have helped with here is not dramatic intensity or rich complexity of texture, but a precise sense of tone. Dr. Leavis's essay on "The Line of Wit" suggests itself as a background document; and here is a salient difference with the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

poets of the 1930s. Even when the language of their poems was that of common speech, its *stance* was not: it was often enough a prophet's, a bardic stance. Moreover, one or two of Mr. Davie's best poems, thinking their way through metaphor with a surgical exactness, take the reader unawares with genuine energy and intensity. Take "Poem as Abstract" (which owes a little, one must concede, to Spender's "The Pylons"):

A poem is less an orange than a grid;
It hoists a charge; it does not ooze a juice.
It has no rind, being entirely hard.

—and the poet is no tree, but rather, a sculptured abstract

caging such serenity of stress
As boughs, or fruit that breaks them, cannot learn.

Certainly, Mr. Davie's range in this book is a very limited one. By the time he has done, the reader finds he has had enough of these neat quatrains or tercets with their one well placed point, telling yet deflating. Several of the poems ("An English Revenant," "Woodpigeons at Raheny") hint that the author has too. After all, a Movement (as Newman said) is a thing that moves: recent work by Mr. Davie in magazines in Britain suggests that he is coming to use his fine intelligence and meticulous control in the service of a wider range of experience and a freer and more direct kind of treatment.

I put Mr. Davie first, because in his book the new equipment of the "Movement" shows in sharp, small, restricted focus. Mr. Larkin's work, less austerely impressive, is much more relaxed, eupeptic, and immediately endearing. He is less interested in moral, more in factual subtleties (like the psychological effects of time as it passes, for example); but the background is much the same. For Mr. Davie's "our Black Country," Mr. Larkin has industrial midland Coventry, "where my childhood was unspent." Mr. Larkin, too, has a turn of phrase that embodies a dry wit and a distinctive tone, but it is not dry and severe—when he is "Looking Into A Young Lady's Photograph Album" and sees her

In pigtails, clutching a reluctant cat,
Or furred yourself, a sweet girl-graduate

the lines show a neat "invention" in its old sense (a finding of the relevant, revealing idea), and a felicity of rhyme and tone which are strong enough to take charge of meaning (see what happens to "sweet"). This, though, is one of the lightest poems in the book. The most ambitious, "Church Going" (which seems to me to be a truly outstanding and topical poem), has the same easy control over a varied tone, and can move without disrupting its texture through exact

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thought and passing self-deprecation to a sincere plainness which borders upon genuine solemnity:

A serious house on serious earth it is,
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognized, and robed as destinies.
And that much never can be obsolete,
Since someone will forever be surprising
A hunger in himself to be more serious,
And gravitating with it to this ground,
Which, he once heard, was proper to grow wise in
If only that so many dead lie round.

It is worth while to notice exactly how words like "compulsions," "robed," "surprising" or "proper" affect this verse: certainly, they do so by creating not a rich meaning through association, so much as a tone, through supple modulation, which inspires in the reader confidence and respect as well as emotion.

Mr. Robert Conquest, though he looks like becoming the *doyen* of the "Movement," is not quite a typical member of it. His background does not seem to be Midland or non-conformist or suburban, and extensive travel (as a foreign office civil servant) in the Balkans and elsewhere give his verse a quite distinctive variety and exotic colour. Indeed, from the hints in his poems, his life seems to have been a little like that of the 1930s literary generation: which may be why his "young ladies" create a more glamorous and (in every sense) disturbing impression than Mr. Larkin's, and why sometimes he allows phrases to enter his verse ("delectable smooth thighs," "brilliant nights"), which Mr. Davie would have ejected from his, supposing they could have entered even his mind, with the tongs. Moreover—let us tot up the whole debit side at once—just occasionally, Mr. Conquest parodies himself:

The apparatus of paradise
Is here, is made their own.
Roses and dragonflies
Glow on water or lawn.

Even to call a poem "A Level of Abstraction," even to give it as last line "Love is a general word," will not place or chasten this. But I now turn with alacrity to the good qualities of *The Colour of Doubt*, for they are important enough to make it easily the richest and most exciting of these three books. In the first place, while Mr. Davie's technical range is very, and Mr. Larkin's fairly, narrow—Mr. Conquest's extends from the opening lines of "A Woman Poet":

The superficial graces go,
And yet such grace remains
About that bare iambic flow

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Although the syntax strains
To a tense symmetry, and so
Remotely entertains
The thundering percussion

to the dry, rhythm-created wit of "Poem for Julian Symons":

like all images, this ash-born wine
Is no reliable or fruitful start
For anyone attempting to define
The problems of art

to the kind of verse for which Mr. Conquest is truly outstanding. What kind is this? It is a combination of two things. First, the best poems in this book take shape under an intellectual control just as scrupulous as Mr. Davie's; but while his arguments often start afresh with each stanza, Mr. Conquest's are far more sustained and flexible, and resolve themselves only as the poem draws to its close. Second, is what really makes the first possible. Instead of Mr. Davie's images, taken as a rule intellectually, for a single respect of relevance, Mr. Conquest's verse draws on a rich stream (whether from the Balkans, modern pictorial art, modern science, or his conception of space travel) which flows with brilliant sensuous amplitude. The first stanza of "Guided Missiles Experimental Range" well fits his own verse:

a wealth below the level of the eye;
Out of a black, an almost violet sky
Abundance flowers into points of light.

This is the abundance of sensuous life filling out the arguments; which run, at the measured steady pace of complete control, through Mr. Conquest's poems. It is connected, too, with another thing. Mr. Davie and Mr. Conquest both have several poems about poetry-making: the recurrent concern, with the measure of agreement between the two poets, being one further indication of the existence of a new trend. But while Mr. Davie approaches the problem as one of the poem and its style, for Mr. Conquest it takes on the more massive contour of the complete relation of poem to writer:

word and image, the whole outer song
Can only live as surface to the strong
Thrust of the poet's whole self and language . . .

—and occasionally, when that strong thrust drives fully through it, Conquest's verse rises sheer out of the slightly ambivalent "Movement" tone, to the measured, confident richness of a poet who knows his own full power, resource and sincerity. A notable, because from its subject surprising, example of this is "The Landing in Deucalion." Here is the end of the poem, the whole of which is a subtle examination of why this imagined landing on Mars is a fit subject for verse:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For as they reach that unknown vegetation
Their thirst is given satisfaction greater
Than ever found but when great arts result;
Not just new detail or a changed equation
But freshly flaming into all the senses
And from the full field of the whole gestalt.

And so I sing them now, as others later.

The provenance of these poets, so far as they have one, is clear enough. Mr. Larkin's verse reminds one, occasionally, of Robert Graves. Mr. Conquest's science, and occasionally his diction, may have a little—Mr. Davie's style certainly has a great deal—to do with Empson. (Mr. John Wain has recently stated, in an article in the *London Magazine*, that he consciously based his own verse on Empson's.) It seems to be only a handful of Empson's poems which are relevant: not the early bewildering scientific cryptograms, but those like "Aubade" and "Reflections from Anita Loos" and "Missing Dates" and "Reflection from Rochester" which come towards the end of his active period as a poet. Other poets associated with the Movement owe something to Muir. But the essential fact is plain. It is the outsiders of the 1930s who exercise the formative influence on these writers; and they do so because within (partly, indeed, *through*) the limitations of an exact and formal technique, their work had a certain radical honesty and directness which meant that it contributed to the poet's perennial task: how to achieve a unique speech that still has a massive tap-root in the inexhaustible soil of common speech. To achieve this continuity over distance is the poetic problem. If the "Movement" is to produce—or, I think I might say, has already produced—verse of distinction, it will be because, in outlook or technique (two sides of the one coin) it has found, to this recurrent problem, one more solution.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reviews

DOUGLASS PARKER

Hwaet We Holbytla...

"We were talking of dragons, Tolkien and I," records C. S. Lewis, and to talk or write of dragons metaphysical or allegorical is easy, once the equivalence is settled. Let the dragon equal Original Sin, or Wall Street, or Paranoia, and the obliquity may proceed unhindered, safe from attack in the security of its reference. To write or talk of *real* dragons, however, or *real* elves, or *real* dwarfs, as Professor Tolkien does, is quite another thing, and vastly more difficult—it demands both that the author create his own reality, where dragons, or elves, or dwarfs, can exist, and that he somehow render it acceptable to his readers. In short, that he become a "makar" in the most demanding sense of the word.

Fantasy should, of course, be easy, and seems to be, on the face of it. Just let the old imagination go soaring off into the void—it'll come back with something. But too often the imagination is weak, the void proves to be just that, the air is too thin, and Pegasus does another pratfall. For fantasy, in addition to all the problems of other fiction, has some thorny requirements of its own—whose presence, indeed, constitutes its chief claim to existence as a genre. Since the categorization of Tolkien's trilogy[1] has been an important concern (it has been praised as "super science fiction" and damned as an "overgrown fairy tale"), it appears necessary to preface any treatment of *The Lord of the Rings* with some remarks on fantasy *per se*, its demands, and, ultimately, its claim to any serious reception.

To treat the exclusive problems first, before tackling any considerations of meaning or value, we may say that the criteria of a given fantasy's success *within the genre* are three. Though highly interwoven, they can each be prescinded and analyzed in turn. They are, then, the solidity and variety of the developed structure, its relation to reality, and its viability. The first of these, since it involves the very essence of fantasy, is by far the most difficult. The writer of fantasy is *ipso facto* committed to a situation where the normal laws of everyday reality somehow do not, cannot apply. He is prevented from the almost sublogical recourse of the writer of normal fiction: neither New York, say, nor Paris in the 'twenties, nor mid-nineteenth century Indiana can provide his structure for him. Nor does he have the happy

[1] THE LORD OF THE RINGS, a trilogy: Vol. 1, THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING; Vol. 2, THE TWO TOWERS; Vol. 3, THE RETURN OF THE KING, by *J. R. R. Tolkien*. Houghton Mifflin. $5.00 each.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

salvation of his cousin in science fiction, who clings always to a necessary and handy peg in some facet of physical reality, who can thus defend his work by appeal to the melting point of tin, or the second law of thermodynamics, or—more and more these days—to an "observed sociological trend." The fantasy-writer, having chosen to soar into the void, must create there, almost *de nihilo*, a structure that is so self-consistent and varied that it will withstand any amount of probing.

He may, of course, borrow. Robert Graves has done this to good effect, notably in *Hercules, My Shipmate*, where Apollonius Rhodius, Valerius Flaccus, and the Second Vatican Mythographer were plundered nicely. But there are dangers here. First, *direct* borrowing can be dreadfully limiting: the author is confined to minor variations, whether comic or serious, on a pretty well-worn theme. Secondly, and worse, the method itself can become boring. The gimmick is too easily simply used up. Ideally, then, the author of fantasy should beget his own brat, root and branch, with the resultant strain of creation, and the rather hideous possibility that he may only succeed in being ridiculous.

This first criterion inevitably involves a compromise. Sharpness of delineation, as in all literature, is more to be desired than that vague integrity which presents its own inventions in impressionistic rhetoric. So Arthur Machen's Swinburnian prose eventually nullifies his interesting and highly allegorical structures, as in *The White People*. So H. P. Lovecraft's failure is due, in part, to his misconceiving Poe and trying to be a poetic Poe in prose, with the resultant dependence on blurred adjectives to establish his "universe." For the result must have a reality, and if the author does not possess a sharp enough imagination, a varied enough gift of expression to create a solid and unassailable structure of his own, he had better go back, at least half-way, to the real world.

Which brings us to the second point: every fantasy must be buttressed, however skewly, on reality. This is not to reiterate the point of the preceding paragraph, nor to insist that sometimes the milieu, the background, must be in the here and now. Rather, there must be some sort of a bridge, some connection between the real world and the fantasy-world. Otherwise, however beautiful the air-castle, it is unattainable, and of no conceivable relevance to anyone except its builder. This is the reason, for example, that the *Rahmenerzählung*, the frame-story, is employed in so much fantasy: it provides the necessary juncture. The dream-frame in the *Alice* stories is not just Victorian impedimenta required to preserve an Oxford don from the charge of utter frivolity, nor is it a sort of attenuated romantic irony calculated to relieve the reader's mind ("There, now! That didn't happen at all, did it? It was just a dream!"). It justifies itself totally as a *point d'appui*,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whence the existing reader may make his sallies into the non-existing world.

There is more to the requirement than this, however. The mere physical trappings of connection are not enough, if the fantasy is too irreal. To start with one of Aristotle's saner literary judgments, poetry—or literature in general—must concern itself with "men doing things." Add "or something *like* men" after "men," and the dictum applies to fantasy. The "*like*" is important. Any analogy, any likeness, any possible resemblance *may* be employed, but some *must* be. The reworking of reality may be satirical, as in Swift or Carroll, it may be a reduction of elements, as in G. U. Fletcher's (Fletcher Pratt's) *The Well of the Unicorn*, it may be sentimental, as in most of Ray Bradbury's fantasy, but it has to exist. And, in the final analysis, the more motifs of this sort, or skew-seen problems, or one-to-one correspondences the author incorporates, the more successful he is likely to be.

The third criterion is viability. By this I mean the necessity that the story, or novel, must have a further bridge, one that will make its distant and upside-down, often insane, matter acceptable to someone besides the author. For Wonderlands and flying islands are quite removed from most of us, and, unless something like our point of view occurs somewhere in the book, we import it ourselves, to the great detriment, and possibly destruction, of the work at hand. This is a great deal more important than might appear at first, and the best way to comprehend it is to return to Alice again, and to try conceiving of Wonderland without her. The impossibility of this emerges immediately, because Alice and her much-labored "common sense" are both first and final causes of the work and all its happenings. Without her, without the impingement of her everydayness, we would be left with a rather uncommon and disturbing Mme Tussaud's, where nothing ever happens, nor should happen—since it is Alice who perceives the idiocy (of Victorian England? of reality?), and, in so doing, compels the reader to acceptance, if not of the fantasy-world, at least of the author's point of view.

But viability, which has as its end the creation of a sympathetic attitude on the reader's part, need not be borne by the protagonist. Allegory is one way, as in Spenser, or Charles Williams, or Mann's *Doctor Faustus*. Another, not without its effects, is anachronism, as witness T. H. White's Arthurian stories, where Merlin, living backwards, is continually evoking objects from the twentieth century. This is fundamentally trivial, since its greatest achievement is a sort of titillative amusement. Further, it can easily wreck the whole fabric of the fantasy. Still, when done well, and on a light basis, it has its points, as does its reverse—the irruption of something other-worldly into a completely "normal" situation, as in *The Turn of the Screw*, or M. R. James' ghost stories, or Anthony Boucher's *The Compleat Werewolf*. Whatever its method, however, this viability must be present

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in any substantial work of fantasy, or a normal reaction against dragons, or derring-do, or werewolves, will ruin the author's accomplishment.

This triad of criteria does not bring us beyond the limits of the genre. Attention to them may, if plot, characters, and a reasonable competence in writing are added, assure the author a certain limited success *in fantasy*, where he can count on the enthusiastic attention of a number of aficionados. But for him to attain to any recognized status outside of this tight circle, his work must be something more. Fantasy suffers a general deprecation as a genre, a serious genre, with the resultant corollary that anything good emerging from it is immediately recategorized. Whether this blanket deprecation arises from the fact that an immense amount of trivia is written under fantasy's rubric, or from a critical delusion that it's easy, or from a suppressed Puritanism that demands that people grow up and put away childish things, such as fairy tales, I cannot say. But in any case, considering this attitude, it's quite plain to see why few works "of the imagination" have received anything near the enthusiastic reception of Tolkien's trilogy, and why the one serious attack on it, a rather nasty hatchet-job by Edmund Wilson, appears to have resulted from Wilson's ineluctable conviction that all fantasy is trash, *The Lord of the Rings* is fantasy, ergo. . . .

The only way that fantasy can break out of its tight little circle is to be "other-directed" in a peculiarly literary sense. That is to say, fantasy, to amount to anything, should be employed not as an end but a means, a means toward a perception, or perceptions, of reality that can better be attained and expressed in that genre than in any other. It should not be turned ever inward on the uselessly gemlike quality of its own essence, on the fruitless polishing of its own facets, to the exclusion of reality in any higher sense; else the serious reader, the serious critic, can dismiss it as he would any other circular procedure, as Wilson—not quite fairly—once spat on detective stories. The genre, to succeed, must forget that it is a genre, and look outside.

And fantasy is capable of making statements, of leading to perceptions that are valuable and valid. Like poetry, it is not tied down with "what Alcibiades did, or what happened to him." Like poetry, it makes and must adhere to its own rules. Like poetry, it can afford to deal with essences. It is no accident, nor "real" fiction *manqué*, that Butler and Swift created fantasies to pinpoint the nature of society and the nature of the beast. C. S. Lewis and Charles Williams would not have been better off writing theological treatises. Spenser accomplished considerably more than he might have by versifying, say, Cicero's *De Officiis* in a *real* setting. In each of these cases, the sloughing off of the normal world, while imposing its own restrictions, has enabled the author to get nearer to a fundamental reality. And the varieties of approach remain infinite, and so do the possible benefits.

The present case is an unusual one, even for fantasy. *The Lord of*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Rings is probably the most original and varied creation ever seen in the genre, and certainly the most self-consistent; yet it is tied up with and bridged to reality as is no other fantasy. It has the highest of heroics and is yet eminently viable; but the medium of that viability is insufficient. Finally, though it labors under two almost impossible literary burdens—reams of interpolated bad verse and an utter lack of more than surface characterization—it leads to a perception, a valuable one, and one which depends greatly on the tremendous amount of sympathy created for its characters. In fine, its success is due, in part, to its shortcomings.

To establish this, a bit of its history must be rehearsed.

In 1937, J. R. R. Tolkien, then Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, published a children's fairy tale called *The Hobbit*, which was, and is, immensely successful. It told of a quest by a company of dwarfs in a far-off time to wrest a stolen treasure from a dragon. With them they took, on the mistaken assumption that he was a professional burglar, a *hobbit*. Hobbits were Tolkien's first, and I think his greatest, creation. They are plump, comfort-loving, practical not-quite-fairies, with little or no magic and a great aversion to adventure. Their names are rather ridiculous[2], with an air of Wodehouse about them: Bilbo Baggins was the burglar. And the success of the book was due, I believe, to two things: first, Tolkien's ability to fashion his wide knowledge of Northern antiquity into a real situation; second, and more important, the tension which resulted from the hero's being half-unwilling and completely unsympathetic to the whole business of a quest in the first place. The heroics were high, and wild, and even sad, but were always held in balance by Bilbo's common-sense approach, the frequent what-am-I-doing-here-in-all-this-idiocy that forestalled any such objection by the reader and made the whole universe acceptable.

What happened then can be reconstructed. The Professor was pressed from all sides to write a sequel. He was some time in obliging.[3] It was fourteen years before the sequel was announced, and seventeen before the first third of it appeared. And that sequel was no children's story.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien has taken the world which he created in *The Hobbit* and expanded it almost out of recognition. The comfortable Shire of the hobbits, a quiet enough place in the first book, becomes the epitome of rusticity in the trilogy. It exists cosily and uncomprehendingly on the borders of a wild and heroic

[2] The name "hobbit" is a case in point. Wilson is almost right for the *feeling* of its derivation, a portmanteau of the rustic "Hob" (as in hobgoblin) and "rabbit." But Tolkien, in Volume 3 of the trilogy, explains it as what might be a weakened form of a possible Anglo-Saxon word for "hole-builder"—*holbytla*.

[3] He did publish, in 1949, one other children's book—quite short, and for somewhat younger readers—*Farmer Giles of Ham*. Here the same tension is observable—the stolid, practical farmer compelled against his will to don armor, fight a dragon, and, in general, be heroic.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

land which is literally cleaved down the middle by a dualism that is absolute: the opposition between Good and Evil. The place, now defined, is "Middle-Earth"; the time, the "Third Age," just before the cataclysmic battle between the two forces which will bring that age to an end.

"Good" versus "Evil" is not quite accurate. The Evil forces are all black, granted. So black, in fact, that they rarely emerge completely from a Zoroastrian fen-fog. Sauron, the Dark Lord, the Lord of Evil, is never seen at all, but only perceived through his extensions: orcs—manlike beings created by him for the coming battles—; trolls; men whom he has enslaved, and who have thus lost all identity; an octopus-like *thing* called a Balrog, and an utterly malignant giant spider named Shelob. These extensions, with the single exception of Shelob, have no personality of their own. They are not so much evil as Evilness, and this fact has caused some difficulty among reviewers, who would seemingly demand more horror and gore, or a "*good* orc," or, most frequently, a look at Sauron. "How can you be afraid of something you can't even see?" demands one, speaking of the Lord of Evil. To reply to this rather self-defeating question, one need only say that a front elevation of Sauron would be impossible. By playing on basic fears with such devices as the cannibalism of the orcs, the squidness of the Balrog, the spiderosity of Shelob, Tolkien has surrounded his Dark Lord with such an aura of utter malignity that any presentation, no matter how horrible, would be anticlimactic. It might even verge toward the ridiculous, as do Lovecraft's ten-foot conoid monsters with suckers on their feet and hideous beaklike mouths around their middles. Worse, it would specify the nature of Evil, thus dissipating the carefully nurtured haze with one dubious shocker. For Evil here is and must be unspecified, nearly allegorical.

But, from pondering overmuch on the monsters, some critics, notably Wilson, have walked, head down, into a much more serious misapprehension—that, because the Evil forces approach abstraction, the Good People must, too, and so what we have is an overgrown game of cops and robbers, the good guys against the bad guys, the same old piddling allegory, and the good guys always win, so what the hell? This is to misunderstand the work badly, on two counts. First, the characters on the Good Side (or, better, the un-Evil side) are not abstractions, nor are they wholly good, nor are they alike in anything but that they are beings faced with utter destruction or qualified existence in a totally deterministic universe. For—the second count—this is *not* primarily the story of "the endless struggle between Good and Evil," nor is it at all an allegory of this: it is the story of the *end of an age*, an age which the author has gone to a fantastic amount of effort to make specific, to make real. And it is from the varied reactions of races and individuals to this end and to other ends of other ages, past and future, that the meaning of the work arises.

These races—elves, dwarfs, men, Ents, and hobbits—all have separate

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

histories, separate fates—all duly recorded in chronicles and genealogical tables at the end of the third volume. The elves are old, exiled, and immortal, their connection with the struggle has a sorrowful outcome in any case, and they fight. The dwarfs are a slowly dying race, with not much impetus except revenge and greed, and they fight. There are several kingdoms of men, decadent, vigorous, and primitive, having various stakes in the conflict, and they fight. The Ents, tree-giants who are the oldest created beings, fight, though their declining existence will continue unchanged whatever the outcome. And even some hobbits, to whom all this is as unreal in the beginning as it is to the reader of the book, each find their private involvement in it, and they fight.

The hobbits, in fact, provide the thread that ties the story together (it is presumably transcribed from their chronicle, the "Red Book of Westmarch"). Briefly, the outcome of this whole struggle has been concentrated into a ring which Bilbo Baggins obtained, in the course of *The Hobbit*, from a loathsome but rather intriguing cave-dwelling creature named Gollum. This ring, as fey a piece of jewelry as can be found in literature, is a Ring of Power, in fact, *the* Ring of Power. It renders its wearer invisible; it corrupts him to the service of Sauron if he wears it; it can, if it falls into Sauron's hands, mean the absolute destruction of men, elves, *et al.* The problem, then, is to destroy the Ring—but this can only be done by returning it to its source, which is in the very center of Mordor, Sauron's land. So a quest-in-reverse is begun, object not to gain, but to get rid of something. The most prominent members of the original company of questers are Gandalf, a wizard; Aragorn, a man; and two hobbits, Bilbo Baggins' adopted nephew Frodo and his servant Sam. After vicissitudes, sojourns, deaths, delays, and battles, Frodo and Sam win through to their goal, where Gollum, ever after his stolen Ring, seizes it and falls to his and its destruction. The power of Sauron dissolves, the armies of men are victorious, and Aragorn becomes King, extending a rule of peace and justice over Middle-Earth. Frodo and Sam return to their comfortable homeland, expel a backwash of the Evil that has touched their Shire, and settle down again, Frodo to write an account of the happenings, Sam to achieve local eminence. And the Third Age ends, and the Fourth Age, the Age of Men, begins. All is prosperity.

Put that way, it sounds rosy, but it isn't. The victory is always for a time, never absolute. (We have a hint of Shelob's eventual return, for example.) Free will has not, as some critics think, been restored; it never existed in the first place, nor did determinism reside in the Ring. The immortal elves must depart to their land oversea. Granted, Gandalf, the aged Bilbo, the dwarf Gimli, Frodo, and eventually Sam go with them to attain some sort of eternal life. But the rest must die without hope of return or after-life, even Aragorn, the King, and the elf-maiden Arwen, who gave up her immortality to marry him. And the wonders, good and bad, will fade.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The structure built about this thread is as varied and complex as is conceivable in 1191 pages of text and appendices, not merely by statement and genealogy, or even in conception, but in the working out and placing of this material. It is noteworthy that each of the three major characters has his corrupted counterpart to play out the dualism on a human, non-abstract scale: Gandalf has Saruman, the fallen White Wizard; Aragorn has Denethor, the maddened Steward of Minas Tirith; and Frodo has Gollum, also named Smeagol, who was once a hobbit, and who was led by the Ring into fratricide. Or, to take another instance, the marriage—and fate—of Aragorn and Arwen is skillfully foreshadowed by the deft interworking of created legend. All in all, to hold in abeyance the abstract nature of Evil, Tolkien has made his world a prodigious and, so far as I can judge, unshakable construct of the imagination.

This world is not, of course, unconnected with the real one. As one would expect, given Tolkien, it is Northern, or, rather, wholly English, though it does not take place in England. This is first evident in the names—again, what one might expect of a philologist who claims to have written the work "for the languages" (a statement Wilson believes implicitly).[4] Once Tolkien's methods are understood, the possibilities

[4] For example, there are those names formed from Anglo-Saxon roots which connect with this world by simply glossing their referends: Shelob "she-spider" (Anglo-Saxon *lobbe*); Balrog "evil-exciter" (AS *bealu, wregan*). Secondly, some names add a reality, if a scholarly one, purely by derivation: "Middle-Earth" recalls, designedly, the AS *middangeard* and the Old Norse *miðgarð*; the names of Gandalf ("magic elf") and the dwarfs come straight out of the Old Norse *Voluspa*. More important than these merely evocative instances, however, are the names where a real sort of *omen-nomen* punning is at work: *Ent*, for instance, is a perfectly good AS word for "giant." But Tolkien, with a rather Druidic twist, has made *his* Ents giant trees, and, further, the oldest beings in existence in Middle-Earth, almost pure essence—the result, or cause, of a monkish play on the monkish Latin *entia*. "Orc" may be more instructive of the method. It is used in *The Lord of the Rings* to replace the "goblin" of *The Hobbit*, where (in the first edition) "orc" occurs only in the sword-name "Orcrist" ("Goblin-cleaver"). But the orcs in the trilogy are definitely something more sinister than the rather folksy goblin, and so the AS *orc*, a word taken over early from the Latin *orcus*—also the source of "ogre"—and glossed succinctly as *hel-deofel*, was employed, having the broader implications of complete Evil. There may even be a glance here, on the Professor's part, at Ariosto's *orco*, or at the prophetic works of Blake, where the character Orc, evil in part, is necessary, as are Middle-Earth's orcs, for the transition from one age to another. By a rather more involved and much less certain convolution, Gollum's original name ("Smeagol") and that of the brother he murdered ("Deagol") seem to evoke the crime of Cain. I preserve my reasoning on this last point to show the fascination which Tolkien can exercise on the susceptible: He admittedly (Vol. 3, p. 415) made these names up to "translate" two names in the Hobbit-speech meaning "burrowing, worming in" and "secret" (the Hobbit-speech was not Anglo-Saxon)—i.e., "Smeagol" from AS *smeagan* "examine, peer in," "Deagol" from AS *deagol* "hidden, secret" (*dieglan* "hide"). So far as the story goes, this works out nicely: Smeagol, before his crime, does peer into everything, and, after it, worms into the ground; Deagol tried to hide the Ring when he found it. But the more the names are looked at, the more they seem to have another dimension: they might be just the type of glosses that some Anglo-Saxon Isidore would have used to ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

become almost limitless. Gandalf's opponent Saruman takes his name, of course, from the AS *searumann* "man of treachery," and it fits him very well. But, considering Gandalf's "Elvish" name, "Mithrandir," and the relentless dualism of the work, it is difficult to avoid at least an echo here of another dualism—Zoroastrianism, with its Lord of Evil, Ahriman, and its *Saoshyant*, its Savior, Mithra, who was reincarnated as Gandalf is. Or take the name of Sauron, the "learned reptilian suggestion" at which Wilson sneers. The snakiness *is* important, because it identifies Sauron as *the* Worm, *the* Serpent, and thus Evil, without binding him to any particular religious expression of that Evil, such as Satan or Nidhogg. The "learned suggestions" are not scholarly tomfoolery—they deepen, expand, and furnish a juncture.

This works in larger areas, too. Tolkien has made his world a reflection, or "pre-reflection" of England before the triumph of Christianity, of the action and reaction between Celt and Teuton and their various branches. In so doing, he has ransacked the available mythologies, but reworked rather than borrowed, so that the result is almost a presentation of archetypes of existent myths. The elves are Celtic in language and fate, but their languages are somehow pre-Celtic, while their immortality in the Western Land, though very like the Gaelic *Tir na nOg*, is only one of several concepts presented which might have been conflated in the story of that island which sank beneath the wave. Men are mortal, though, and even the declining branch, which is Celt-like, has the fate and orientation of Teutons. Thus the malignant grave-spirits, the "barrow-wights," seem to prefigure the story of Glam in the Old Norse *Grettissaga*; thus the dead fight in one of the final battles—but in a much less glorious situation than would the heroes of a Christianizing Valhalla; thus the final cataclysm itself is a Ragnarök, but not one guaranteed to come out all right. The Ring-quest is a fusion of elements from both sides: the Celtic *Voyage of Brann* and other Arthurian preliminaries, the Teutonic *Draupnir* (Balder's ring), Sigurth's treasure, and Siegfried's ring. And, though the marriage of Aragorn and Arwen is mainly Celtic in conception—it might be a clear statement of the mightily confused situation of Pwyll, or Manawyddan, and Rhiannon in the *Mabinogion* —, it brings the two races together in almost an Aeneas-Lavinia type of union.

These similarities, again, are not simply *pour le sport*. In their intensely English orientation, they are necessary to Tolkien's most important bridge between his world and the real world: the implicit statement that our world, in the Age of Men, the Fourth Age, is a *continuation* of his, and will recapitulate its happenings in new terms, as the Third Age recapitulated the Second, and the Second the First.

plain the etymologies of "Cain" and "Abel"—the first from *cunnian* "investigate, find out," the second from *a* (intensive prefix) and *behelan* "conceal." As I say, the fascination is considerable.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This is, if you will, "history": its relevance to our world comes from the fact that it is presented as a cycle which will recur. It must, then, be like our world, or a part of it, and England fits.

As in *The Hobbit*, the hobbits themselves and their Shire—where both works begin and end—provide the necessary "viability," the injection of everydayness into the heroic atmosphere. And it is here that Tolkien falls somewhat short of the mark. Events are too high, too catastrophic to be palliated by an occasional gulp of homespun rusticity. Too often the burden falls on Sam Gamgee, Frodo's batman, and his useful but limited commonsense commonplaces. But a more heavily contributing factor to the relative failure here is the hobbits' double function: they are not only the bastions of normality, they are the actual vehicles of the age-change. Their real name, translated as "halfling," is very significant. Half-fairy, half-man, yet neither, they are a transition-stage from the Third Age to the Fourth, and, in the destruction of the Ring by Frodo, Sam, and the erstwhile hobbit Gollum, they are the efficient causes of the transition itself. This double burden may at times be too much, and the references to the Shire are liable to be too low-keyed, or even mawkish.

But this is a relatively minor cavil. Middle-Earth in the Third Age is so solid and various in itself, so intertwined with the real world in its names and events, that such a necessary weakness in its "Alice" is ultimately unimportant. As fantasy, *The Lord of the Rings* is unexampled and unassailable.

The struggle, of course, comes with any attempt to extend its sphere, to claim for it some excellence as literature. Here, oddly enough, the bone of contention is rarely either of the two fundamental weaknesses—the bad verse or the flat characterizations. Here, I think, the nature of the work takes a hand. The verse, admittedly, is pretty bad—the two best pieces being in Tolkien's invented languages: the Ring-verses in Orc-speech and an elegy in High-Elven. But most of the pieces are by Bilbo and Frodo, whom no reader expects to be poets, and the same allowance for "realism" is made that one makes for Nestor's interminable speeches in Homer. The problem of characterization is more basic. Like the early Northern literature he follows, Tolkien externalizes. Conflicts are rarely within characters, but between characters, without any probing beyond the determination of a simple core of individuality. This is painfully evident in the women, who are slightly less than stock figures, as in Teutonic epic. But the historical warrant for war being a masculine affair, and the immense number of external gestalts that are delineated, tend to choke off the demand for introspection. The weight of the trilogy itself saves both weaknesses, which could have been damning, from supporting a critical rejection.

The attack, when it does come, is blanket and savage, as in the King Charles' Head of this piece, Edmund Wilson's review. A curious

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

job. Nestled in the Spring Books number of the *Nation* under the engaging title, "Oo, Those Awful Orcs!" it is the most sarcastic piece of wrong-headedness to appear outside the pages of *Time* for some years. The reason for the sarcasm is not far to seek: some of the early reviewers were vapidly enthusiastic, and Mr. Wilson is obsessed, as he has been before, with being the Adult in the room. But the wrong-headedness is puzzling. Mr. Wilson has an avowed sensitivity, yet he is out on almost all counts. He classifies the work as a "romance," which it is not. He plumps for more tangible evils, more solid preternaturality, as in Poe—one hopes he means in parts of Poe—totally missing the point. He censures the prose, which is perfectly adequate for most of Tolkien's demands and necessary to the tone, because of a presumed similarity to Howard Pyle—whom he obviously didn't look at. Clinging to Tolkien's disavowal of allegory, he pelts everyone in sight with a general *argumentum ad hominem*: W. H. Auden's taste for the trilogy is excused left-handedly, on the grounds that Auden Likes Quests, while everyone else who dares to share that taste is smeared with the charge of having "a life-long appetite for juvenile trash." The thought-processes here are odd: "juvenile," evidently, because Mr. Wilson's seven-year-old daughter understood nearly every word (she can understand the *Iliad*, then); "trash" from an unshakable preconception that *all* "imaginative romance" is trash. One should compliment him on his daughter, though not on his logic. He resembles nothing so much as a cumquat-devotee censuring a melon.

For *The Lord of the Rings* is not trash, nor is it juvenile, and Tolkien, for all his disclaimers and Wilson's yawps, is not merely indulging a scholar's whim, or playing a learned game, or writing for a silly coterie of escapists. He has accomplished, on an absolute scale, something significant and meaningful, and it should be soberly recognized as such. Specifically, he has rewritten, or rather recreated, *Beowulf*—*Beowulf* as he understands it and has criticized it so well.[5] And he has done this, presumably, because he feels that only in this way can he attain what the author of *Beowulf* (also an antiquary) attained: a sense of man's *Vergänglichkeit*, his impermanence, his perishability. For the unknown West Saxon, life was a thing that exists on the earth and has an end there, where real men confront physical evils that are the more horrible because of their almost abstract nature—the prime use of Christianity in the poem—as though they were in a conspiracy against man. And Wyrd, or Fate, rules the universe, and has not yet wholly become a Christian God, benevolent or vengeful, but is absolute and impersonal—no prophecies, no reprieves. In such a fix, "heroism" is the only way out, not because it comforts like the silly Stoicism *fata volentem ducunt, nolentem trahunt*,

[5] See his Gollancz Lecture, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics" in the *Proceedings of the British Academy* XXII (1936), pp. 245-295.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but because it supplies some meaning in human terms where the universe supplies none. The human condition is tragic, but must be faced up to. And must be lamented.

Tolkien has toiled well and successfully after his paradigm. He is not content with surface resemblances, though they are there: Frodo's "Scouring of the Shire" after the Ring affair is over, for example, parallels Beowulf's killing of the dragon in his own land after he has removed Grendel and his dam from Hrothgar's court. But there are much more essential similarities: Evil, in *The Lord of the Rings*, is as abstract, and yet as physically real, as balanced just this side of allegory, as the monsters in *Beowulf*, and the men are as heroic—though Tolkien pays for it, perhaps, in the sacrifice of "character development." And though the trilogy has the promise of immortality for the elves and a few hobbits, and the poem talks vaguely of a Christian hereafter, they are both pagan works, which look at man's deeds and their inevitable destruction, at life and death, and do not consider this a result of *hybris*, but of doom. They both put this sharply in a particular situation which can approach the general, not by allegory, but because it lacks the demon of personal associations. Like the kingdom of the Geats, Tolkien's whole marvelous, intricate structure has been reared to be destroyed, that we may regret it. Regret it not in the egotistically self-effacing *Wasteland* fashion, the old look-how-far-we've-fallen wail, but regret it as a necessary concomitant of being human. And for this meaning, the heroic-elegiac meaning of *The Lord of the Rings*, we may well use the words that Tolkien himself borrowed from *Widsith* and applied to *Beowulf*: *"Lif is laene: eal scaeceð, leoht ond lif somod"*—"Life is fleeting: everything passes away, light and life together."

MARIUS BEWLEY

Polynesia and Manhattan in Melville's Art[1]

ISHMAEL, by James Baird, appeared about six months ago, and was, for the most part, greeted by silence. There were one or two acclamatory reviews, but they were exceptions. When the *New York Times Book Review* conspicuously failed to mention it, the indications were that it was a book of some originality. But at more serious levels of reviewing there may have been other reasons for the silence. For one thing,

[1] ISHMAEL, by *James Baird*. Johns Hopkins. $5.50. THE RAVEN AND THE WHALE, by *Perry Miller*. Harcourt Brace. $6.75.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we are surfeited with books and articles on Melville, and *Ishmael*, until one gets into it, is not an inviting book to read. Mr. Baird's writing is heavy and often repetitious. It frequently has the kind of wordy fugginess that we have come to associate with those writers like Cassirer and Susanne K. Langer who deal with that intangible no man's land between symbolism and objective reality, and whose words multiply at a rate that is in direct proportion to the elusiveness of their subject matter. And crucial points of Mr. Baird's argument depend on a terminology taken over from Jungian psychology that is, at first, as disconcerting as a similar dependence on Freudian terminology would be.

It is extraordinary that with these marks against it *Ishmael* ends up by being, in a word, the best book that has so far been written on Melville, and I suspect there will be no better for a long time to come. A disconcerting number of writers on Melville have tried to show us an artist who is either a bewildered Christian enduring some interminable dark night of the soul, or a Marlovian atheist whose mind is as superficial as it is vulgar. Melville, of course, was neither. Although there are a good many more marks of Christianity in Melville's writing than Mr. Baird will grant, his religious sensibility, which was profound, was centered outside the Christian context. It is the great distinction of Mr. Baird's book that he makes the nature of this religious but non-Christian context perfectly clear, and in ways which demonstrate its immediate relevance to Melville's art. We say loosely that Melville was a major artist, but this is the first book I have read which makes the grounds of that stature perfectly clear and intelligible, and which explains and demonstrates by critical analysis rather than by inviting a slight shiver of response in the presence of some inexplicable, half-guessed-at greatness. I do not mean that Mr. Baird is guilty of a delimiting explicitness, or that he packages a living achievement in art in a few neat formulations; but he does tell us what Melville was about, and he points out the direction our response should take.

Mr. Baird begins his book with a consideration of a number of popular modern artists to whom the term "primitivist" has been loosely applied. He looks for an explanation of the appeal of these writers, not in their exoticism of surface and colour, but in the cultural failure of the western world. In the course of tracing the descent of the primitivist artist from the meaningless symbols of an exhausted culture to the primitive sources of meaning from which new life-symbols can be shaped, Mr. Baird gives us his picture of Melville as artist. With a considerable knowledge of anthropology and ethnology to draw on, the literary critical discipline yet remains the determining one, even though his subject is not one in which the evaluative act can chiefly figure. By the time one finishes the book it is clear why Melville was "rediscovered" when he was. It took a catastrophe as overwhelming as the First World War to crack the shell of the western

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Protestant world and reveal the meaninglessness of those symbols by which men had once truly lived, but for a hundred years and more had only pretended to. It was merely a case of Melville's having made recognitions that his potential audience were to make seventy-five years later under the impact of world tragedy. It has long been a cliché to speak of the literature of the 'twenties as one of disillusion and despair growing out of the War, but the War also emphasized a need that had long been felt for a renewed religious symbolism that found, however obscurely and obliquely, some measure of satisfaction in an exploration of primitive and oriental art and thought. Mr. Baird is careful to distinguish, in the brilliant analyses of this theme in his opening chapters, between the Protestant and the Catholic sensibilities. But granting the difference, for the Catholic brought up in the ambience of Protestant culture the desiccation of Christian symbolism remains a problem, even if a less radical one. The true primitivist artist, then, affords a new avenue backward in time to archetypal patterns capable of renewing conventional religious symbolism, or of creating, in the hands of a genuinely original great artist, a new symbolism that can resolve, or at least freshly formulate, those basic problems and needs which elude the authority of a traditional but enfeebled Church. It is impossible here to do more than indicate the scope of Mr. Baird's argument, but I wish to consider his treatment of two of the central symbols in *Moby Dick*, Queequeg and the White Whale, and in the course of the discussion it may become clear what he means by calling Melville a maker of new religious symbols.

But before discussing these two symbols a word should be said of Mr. Baird's stance as a symbolist critic. The excesses of some symbolist theorists in dealing with literature are well enough known. They go at least as far along their peculiar bias as the Freudian critics of a decade ago. A recent writer on symbolism (and one, incidentally, for whom Mr. Baird has words of praise) writes of *The Scarlet Letter* that the lives of the characters "both mental and physical, are a function of the meaning of the scarlet letter, which alone remains real among the appearances it generates." This seems to me enough like double-talk to be capable of several interpretations, even in its context, but on the whole the direction is clear. It would substitute for that rich texture of human and moral meanings that makes up a work of art a tissue of inbreeding words that propagate themselves in a realm of symbolic autonomy. If this can be done with Hawthorne, the possibilities with Melville are terrifying. Speaking of the Pequod's voyage (Melville's voyages generally are symbols of symbolism) the same author writes: "Pursuing the symbolic voyage to the utmost, but realizing at the same time its ineffectuality, Ahab is ruined, and Melville discovers that he is potentially an Ahab, the devil's partisan, the nihilist."

There is a strong positive element in *Moby Dick* that this insistence on the voyage as a symbol of intellectual process with no object but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

itself, cannot account for. In *Moby Dick* the direction is *away* from nihilism. It is Melville's sense of cultural and religious failure, his discovery of the meaninglessness of the symbol in his society, that starts him on the backward, downward voyage towards the depths of time where the symbol can be renewed at its source. The direction is from meaninglessness towards meaning: it is not nihilistic. I have wished to make this point at the outset because, while Mr. Baird is greatly indebted to modern symbolist theory, he focuses his analysis of Melville's symbols in a context of human needs and history that gives them direction and form, and limits their ultimate autonomy.

Within limits it should be possible to define the meaning of a work of art, and yet there has been remarkably little agreement among critics on the meaning of *Moby Dick*. One of the difficulties has undoubtedly been their tendency to identify Ahab's attitudes with Melville's, as we have just seen one of them doing in the passage quoted above. Ishmael is, indeed, to be rather largely identified with Melville, and through Ishmael we can see how remote Ahab is from being Melville's personal mouthpiece in the novel. Possibly Ahab represents one aspect of Melville, but if so the novel is a kind of ritual exorcism by which Melville purges himself, in this particular work of art, of Ahab's spiritual sickness. Mr. Baird's analysis of the nature of this spiritual sickness is precise and convincing. In a summary passage (p. 251) he writes: "Among all [Melville's] men of wisdom, whatever their symbolic forms, Ahab of *Moby Dick* has no place. He is insanity as distinguished from sapience. . . . Opposite to Queequeg, he is a gigantic symbol of the sickness of the self, the disease of the egotist-absolutist of Christendom."

Queequeg is the central symbol of the positive values Melville is creating or discovering in his masterpiece. He represents harmony with nature, a kind of pagan negative-capability as opposed to Ahab's defiance. The significant action of the novel is the way this wisdom embodied in Queequeg, which Melville offers us as a kind of evocation from a primitive-pagan world, is communicated to Ishmael. Ishmael, it will be recalled, enrolls in the crew of the Pequod because he wants to recover spiritual health. The long voyage that is finally brought to a disastrous termination in the China seas is a kind of long drawn-out passion play for Ishmael, ending in a symbolical resurrection from which he returns to life, as one must surmise, cured of that spiritual malady under which we see him suffering in the first chapter of the book.

The relevant portions of the novel which deal with this symbolic resurrection are Chapter CX and the Epilogue. In analysing Queequeg's role as the symbol of positive value, Mr. Baird concentrates on a discussion of Queequeg's tattooing and its significance in the Polynesian ethos. He then discusses the resurrection symbol of the Epilogue, but somewhat surprisingly he omits any reference to the very explicit

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

correlation Melville makes between the two symbols. It will be recalled that Queequeg, during the course of the voyage, is for a time so grievously ill that his life is despaired of. As he appears to be dying, he asks the ship's carpenter to construct a coffin for him, but after it is built he recovers. He keeps it in his possession, using it as a sea chest, and in his leisure moments he covers the lid with a fancy design:

> Many spare hours he spent, in carving the lid with all manner of grotesque figures and drawings; and it seemed that hereby he was striving, in his rude way, to copy parts of the twisted tattooing on his body. And this tattooing had been the work of a departed prophet and seer of his island, who, by those hieroglyphic marks, had written out on his body a complete theory of the heavens and the earth, and a mystical treatise on the art of attaining truth; so that Queequeg in his own proper person was a mystery to behold; a wondrous work in one volume; but whose mysteries not even himself could read, though his own live heart beat against them; and these mysteries were therefore destined in the end to moulder away with the living parchment whereon they were inscribed, and so be unsolved to the last.

Later on in the novel the coffin is substituted for the sun-warped life-buoy, and so becomes an unusual life-preserver. After the Pequod has been sunk, Ishmael is saved by this coffin on which is inscribed the testament of Queequeg's primitive faith. It is a testament that preaches harmonious adjustment to nature, and we know from Queequeg's whole life, as Melville gives it to us, that he represents a kind of instinctive charity and adjustment to the world that is the antithesis of Ahab's madness. To recapture the full flavour of Queequeg we have to go back to Chapter X:

> As I sat there in that now lonely room . . . I began to be sensible of strange feelings. I felt a melting in me. No more my splintered heart and maddened hand were turned against the wolfish world. This soothing savage had redeemed it. There he sat, his very indifference speaking a nature in which there lurked no civilized hypocrisies and bland deceits. Wild he was; a very sight of sights to see; yet I began to feel myself mysteriously drawn towards him. And those same things that would have repelled most others, they were the very magnets that thus drew me. I'll try a pagan friend, thought I, since Christian kindness has proved but hollow courtesy.

Queequeg's coffin, then, by virtue of the magic carving on the lid which duplicates his tattooing, stands proxy for the savage himself, or at least for that aspect of him which is symbolically important. In presenting Queequeg as the central channel of spiritual values for Ishmael—indeed, for the whole book—Mr. Baird has performed a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

major service for Melville criticism and interpretation. But it is unfortunate that he has omitted—perhaps on the assumption that it is implicit in his total argument—any reference to the transference of the mystical tattooing from Queequeg's body to his coffin. It is this omitted step by which Melville incarnates most fully his symbolic meaning in the actual words of the text.

In his discussion of the meaning of the White Whale Mr. Baird has made permanently irrelevant a great deal that has been written about *Moby Dick*, and perhaps has spared us a great deal that might have been written in the future. Although there are one or two minor qualifications I would make, his discussion of Moby Dick is by far the most valuable I have read. In his *The Trying-Out of Moby Dick*, Mr. Howard Vincent regretted that no one had yet published a study of Melville's interest in Oriental lore. Perhaps taking this as a cue Mr. Baird has analysed Moby Dick as Hindu Deity (pp. 323-328) in a brilliant passage that is wholly convincing, not so much because of the documentation offered, but because of the genuine illumination it throws on the symbolic meanings of some of the most important chapters in the novel. One of the more impressive chapters in *Moby Dick* is, of course, the one in which little Pip is "carried down alive to wondrous depths" where he sees "God's foot upon the treadle of the loom." Without in any degree delimiting the creative mystery of the chapter, Mr. Baird confers on it a lucid and beautiful intelligibility that, for me at any rate, it never had before. As a symbol, "Moby Dick is the keeper of infinite and timeless wisdom; he is also the unreasoning force of chaos, the destroyer of the Ahab-absolutist who seeks to know him, and the incomprehensible executioner of innocence. In his divings and breachings, in his terrifying whiteness, he merely *is*, in all his mysterious reality of being. The great fish of the Hindus becomes the primal god." In the full-scale discussion by which Mr. Baird arrives at this conclusion, I think he proves the case and gives *almost* the final word on Moby Dick. Later in his discussion of Melville's God, Mr. Baird writes:

> There are no promises in Melville's future. The ultimate God lies yesterday, this day, and forever beyond the reach of man's mind. I take that God to be "the God beyond theism" named by Tillich in *The Courage to Be*. When this fact of Melville's master symbol has been understood, the distance between the symbol of Christ as the man of innocence among men and the symbol of the unknowable God beyond him is illuminated with flashing brilliance. Melville becomes, through the artistic heroism of making Moby Dick, the man of Oriental acceptance in the realm of his ideality. And in that becoming he confirms the symbols of his theology and his sacrament. As artist he passes into the future of the twentieth century, into the next era of the desymbolized Protestant world.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It seems to me possible to subscribe to this on the whole while recognizing certain recalcitrant Christian elements in the symbolism of *Moby Dick* which are not merely "descriptions of effective power in the form itself." The kind of emphasis on suffering in the novel, for example, or what appears to me to be a decidedly non-Hindu distinction between good and evil in the extraordinary chapter on the White Squid, are elements that remain rebellious. Mr. Baird glosses over the Christian implications of Father Mapple's sermon, and his treatment of it is totally inadequate. The astonishing impression of Divine goodness and love which we take away from the greatest of the chapters in *Moby Dick*, "The Grand Armada," (Mr. Baird doesn't mention it) may indeed come from "affective power in the form itself," but where it has produced the highest point of creative intensity and beauty in the book, it simply will not do to dismiss it as a negligible element.

Although there is no other book on Melville as good as this one, such qualifications are serious enough in themselves to make it clear that it is not the ultimate statement. If Melville's religious sensibility is centered outside the Christian concept, there are still Christian elements which enter importantly into the very structure and form of his greatest work, and which we cannot discount without impairing the integrity of our own response to *Moby Dick*. Mr. Baird performs a really great service to Melvillian criticism in revealing its essentially non-Christian bias, but it is naive to imagine that Vishnu has supplanted Christ (that he could do so, given the cultural circumstances) in Melville's sensibility to the extent that Mr. Baird's argument sometimes seems to suggest.

Perry Miller's *The Raven and the Whale* is an attempt to explore the causes in the intellectual and moral climate of mid-nineteenth century America which can explain the failure of *Moby Dick* and Melville's subsequent books. The caption on the dust-jacket reads: "The war of wits and words in the era of Poe and Melville; crisis and comedy in America's quest for literary personality." As one reads the dreary record of literary New York in the 1840's one may well wonder where the comedy is. Moreover, the caption reveals a disappointing bias towards straight literary history which relaxes what I take to be Mr. Miller's controlling concern throughout. This controlling concern is stated nowhere as clearly as in the Prologue:

> Popular novelists sometimes lose their audiences by outraging public taste or morality: cultists are prone to celebrate Melville as one who gallantly threw away prosperity by defying a stupid orthodoxy. But there are often more complicated reasons for an author's loss of readers. These may have less to do with his voyaging alone into dangerous seas of thought than with confusions within the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

culture itself: less with his boldly adventuring into heresy than with the nation's distraction over the problem of comprehending its own identity, wherefore it renders itself incapable of telling what is or is not heretical. A Republic may abandon the artist not because of his aberrations but because of its own.

As Mr. Miller's 350 page book moves on from chapter to chapter we are given a detailed picture of New York literary life in the 1830's and '40's. Although in this context Mr. Miller's Melville looks much smaller than Mr. Baird's, the astonishing thing is that there could have been any rapport at all between him and these people. But we know that such things commonly happen, and the spectacle is worth watching for the sobering lesson it imparts. Still, one prefers Fenimore Cooper's pattern. On his return from Europe Cooper, intelligent and lucid, had looked at the New York literary scene and fled, writing about it ruthlessly in *Home as Found*. If in the end Melville also sheers off, it is never with a movement quite as athletic and clean. But this impression is almost certainly unjust, and is partly owing to the unsatisfactory arrangement of Mr. Miller's book, which gives Melville a decisive role but a shabby part. Speaking of Melville's activities as a literary nationalist while a hanger-on in Evart Duyckinck's New York clique, Mr. Miller writes:

> As far as the city of New York could understand, Melville was at best involved in a subordinate action, a peripheral eddy along the city's irresistible rush toward megalopolis. And so in these pages it will be my concern to mark the supporting role of this minor actor, and not to appraise him as a figure in world literature.

Undoubtedly this is the explanation for the dissatisfaction one feels with *The Raven and the Whale*. Mr. Miller is concerned with two literary cliques of New York intellectuals who, in the 1840's, fought interminably over the meaning of a national literature. Evart Duyckinck and Cornelius Mathews led the nationalist or "home literature" party; Lewis Gaylord Clark, editor of *The Knickerbocker Magazine*, led the politer party which stood for what later came to be called the Genteel Tradition. Mr. Miller's cast of characters, with the exception of Poe and Melville, is as confirmed a set of notable mediocrities as any time and place are ever likely to provide. We really have the right to be interested in them only because of the influence or shadow they may have cast over the art of Melville or Poe. It is disappointing therefore that Mr. Miller has not focussed his intellectual history in terms of Melville's art rather than subordinating that to the history of a movement whose only interest (apart from the antiquarian) is that it impinged on the greatest creative American genius of the time. I speak of Melville only here because Book Four is concerned with making a correlation between Melville's career and the history of the "home literature" movement, whereas Poe (who

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contributes the "Raven" to the title) merely staggers in and out of a number of New York magazine offices, drawing rooms, and gutters, without lending the argument much coherence or form. It is the unenthusiastic reception of *Moby Dick* in 1851 and the subsequent decline of Melville's reputation which is the climax of the narrative; but as far as the reader is concerned, this goal is frequently lost sight of among pages crowded with justly forgotten men and books. The most Melville gets out of it is guilt by association.

Morally, the New York intellectual scene in the 1840's seems to follow the general pattern favoured by the literati everywhere. The picture Mr. Miller gives us is a suffocating one of cliquishness, backbiting jealousy, critical ignorance, and snobbery combined with a general lack of talent that could usually get itself passed off as native genius provided the given artist was equipped with the right friends and the social know-how. Degrees of integrity and decency differed of course: the Duyckincks and Charles Frederick Briggs may be rated high here, and Lewis Gaylord Clark and Rufus Griswold low. But all that they thought and said, which was a great deal, is an unrelieved grey. By frequent quotation and close paraphrasing Mr. Miller follows his practise in *The New England Mind* of letting his subjects speak for themselves. From a scholarly point of view this has much to commend it when dealing with the forgotten dead; but unfortunately the forgotten dead are usually repetitious and dull, which helps to explain why they have been forgotten.

ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

Joyce and His Critics

Is it possible that a common cause of the confusion which attends criticism of James Joyce is his habit of phrasing questions in the form of dogmatic assertions? At least, the cast of grammar with which the critic approaches Joyce seems to influence most remarkably the image with which he finally emerges. Nothing illustrates this point more neatly than the two volumes under review.[1] Mr. Hugh Kenner is declarative (if not imperative), dogmatic, and categorical; prevailingly Messrs. Magalaner and Kain are eclectic, interrogative, and comparative. There are areas of overlap and agreement; there are differences so widespread and indefinite as to be easily dismissed as the natural product of differing temperaments; but there are also oddities and

[1] DUBLIN'S JOYCE, by *Hugh Kenner*. Indiana University Press. $5.75. JOYCE: THE MAN, THE WORK, THE REPUTATION, by *Marvin Magalaner* and *Richard M. Kain*. New York Univ. Press. $5.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eccentricities of interpretation in both volumes, against which one can only feel grateful that Messrs. Magalaner and Kain have provided a few built-in grains of salt.

As the less balanced and more ambitious undertaking, Mr. Kenner's book calls for discussion first. At its most exasperating, this volume reminds one of that famous nightmare of Yeats', in which Bernard Shaw is said to have appeared as a sewing machine which hung in the black and quivering void, forever clicking and smiling. Mr. Kenner's book machine-stitches its immense subject with much the same voluble and confident persistence. It is not a bad book; on the contrary, it is almost as good a book, of a certain sort, as could conceivably be written. In one detail after another, it is illuminating, suggestive, connective. Even its faults are, more often than not, extravagances of virtue. Its sentences bulge at their grammatical seams and overflow the bounds of possible pronunciation, but only because they are choked with thought and opinion. Its author scampers up and down the corridors of Western culture, contracting his verbs for sheer lack of time, and dragging off eminent names under the aspect of adjectives (Eliotic, Aquinatian, Carrollean, even Finneganistic); but he has read the books. He piles abstraction on abstraction, generalization on feckless generalization; but it is only because he is bulging with literary energy. In addition to its other distinctions, surely this is one of the *busiest* books of literary criticism ever written. Yet to read it through is, on balance, a chore and an irritation. The image of Joyce which emerges is scribbled and overscribbled six layers deep in a small, monotonous, continuously emphatic hand by a man whose eye has been myopically fixed to the printed page. It shows us a complicated gadget for arranging words, and several of its products. But the character of the criticism is so marked, its angle of vision so narrow, and its texture so crowded and dogmatic that one is bound to feel reservations regarding its view of Joyce.

The trouble is not that Mr. Kenner's approach is absurdly irrelevant to Joyce, as it would obviously be to Byron; but that it works, in one sense, all too well. There is a terrifying lot of verbal and intellectual machinery in Joyce, to start with; one has only to suggest that he unreeled his life from the beginning in the mood of spiritual aridity and emotional desiccation typical of the elder Flaubert or Wyndham Lewis, and one has gone a long way toward reducing Joyce, his books, and his subject to intricate language-mechanisms. One result of this view is a tendency on Mr. Kenner's part to see sardonic commentary, ironic detachment, and satiric purpose where they were never seen before and pretty certainly were not meant to be seen.

There is indeed a certain warrant for describing the Stephen Dedalus of the *Portrait* as the object of satiric comment. This is, in fact, the artist as a *young* man, and the touches of callowness and priggishness which are sometimes felt in the *Portrait* were even more

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

explicitly marked out in *Stephen Hero*. But Joyce cannot have intended us to follow Stephen's career with as much irony as Mr. Kenner indicates, if only because a hero so callow and unsympathetic would be a complete bore. (A more subtle difficulty is that of dramatizing the kind of abstract, pseudo-philosophic failings which Kenner imputes to Stephen—the forger's career of neo-platonic esthetic, the withdrawal of the crucial principle of epiphanization [p. 121]; it is silly to ask for dramatic evidence of these themes simply because they are impossible to dramatize.) Because Joyce felt this, in the process of reworking *Stephen Hero* into the *Portrait*, he toned down or eliminated many of those touches which made his hero seem too self-absorbed and immature. Thus there is something genuinely unnerving in the sight of Mr. Kenner eagerly pointing up these touches under the rubric of "irony," or irony heightened to the level of something called without further analysis "the truth."

The process may seem insensitive as applied to the *Portrait*; it reaches a kind of climax in Mr. Kenner's suggestion that the whole of *Ulysses* is a monstrous parody of the thinking machine. The sort of evidence which supports a suggestion like this is pretty well defined; some sort of authorial intention has to be demonstrated, preferably from the work itself, or else from the biography. Unfortunately, Mr. Kenner has taken the matter of demonstration for granted, and so approached the parodic parallels in the liberal spirit of a frolic. His argument is graced by quotations from Professor Norbert Wiener, who is apparently invoked as a case of life imitating art. As for what art was imitating, that is very dim indeed. There is, in the chapter, some sort of attempt at establishing a triple parallel or parody relationship involving Yeats, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and Joyce; but who is being satirized, parodied, or paralleled in *Ulysses*, from what point of view, and with what purpose—these matters are left as dark as the primary question, which is simply why we should suppose in the first place that Joyce, when he described Eccles Street, ever wanted us to think of Baker Street?

From one aspect, of course, Stephen Dedalus *is* a detective intent on unravelling (epiphanizing) the clues of an analogical universe; and if a Stephen-Sherlock analogy implies another between God and Professor Moriarty, perhaps this is not more than 90% absurd. But in fact Bloom with his clutter of scientific half-information is just as much a Holmes as a Watson; Stephen the perpetual son is just as much a Watson as a Holmes; and in neither case is the parallel very close. For anyone who wants it, there is another parallel, quite as close and just as useful, between *Ulysses* and *The Hunting of the Snark*; Stephen equals Bellman, Bloom equals Banker, and the Boojum is a challenge to any critic with sporting blood. In all seriousness, the Baker Street analogy seemed to this reader much more like an importation of Kenner's than a natural product of Joyce's imagination. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reason for importing it at all was simply to drive another satiric wedge between Joyce and his ostensible subject matter, and so bring *Ulysses* closer to a work which concerns language and the perversions of language and nothing else.

The truth is that Mr. Kenner has set out on his pursuit of Joyce firmly anchored to certain prepossessions regarding the relation of the artist to his language and material. These prepossessions, probably picked up from Mr. Cleanth Brooks but clutched with all the doctrinaire intensity of Mr. Kenner's own temperament, are responsible for the hard, diamond-like clarity of the portrait which results; I think we must also hold them responsible for its major omissions and distortions. The Joyce whom he draws is rather like the glorified dean of studies whom Stephen bitterly describes as "bright, agile, impassible, and, above all, subtle." He makes no mistakes; he is troubled by no confusions which he does not quickly turn, by some irony either of the author or the object, to literary purposes; and he seems, in a word, to have sprung full-grown from the ear of John Crowe Ransom. He is perfectly formidable in his armored scepticisms and abstract dexterities, and (one is happy to add) so perfectly inhuman as to be quite incredible. In the moist submarine world of the Joyce-footnote, Kenner's figure may serve well the limited and often mysterious purposes of exegetes; as an independent creation, he is a truly bizarre object, after the new American Gothic style—and, one hopes, permanently marginal.

Less clear in its definition of purpose, more aware of its reader, and less assured in its manner, the Magalaner-Kain volume does not take its own procedures quite so blandly for granted as Kenner's book does. It seems designed in some measure as an introductory volume, including frequent surveys of opinion (the authors' assessment of their own writings strikes an odd note), an essay on the reputation, and a biographical summary, as well as a good deal of detailed exegesis. The reader is not advised how responsibility is to be divided between Messrs. Magalaner and Kain, but this presents only a minor problem, since the authors are not as a rule propounding special theses, but indicating possibilities and raising questions. The book is brightly written, literate, and unmannered; after the scurry and mutter of Kenner's volume, it echoes with the airy, leisured magnificence of a Renaissance palazzo. To be sure, it is rather cluttered in places with critical antiquities; the authors tend to paraphrase a good many long-dead opinions, and to cite worthless articles for the sake, and only for the sake, of a complete record. But this is a fault of one method, as narrowness is the fault of another; and it is useful, at almost any price, to have the whole gamut of critical expression spread out before one. If nothing else, it gives one a sense of Joyce as a creative personality, making human as well as artistic choices, arranging his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

effects (not always without duplicity), and imposing his own definition of himself upon a whole generation of stiffnecked, indocile critics.

Having drifted safely beyond the siren-song of the *transition*-claque, the fury of professional Celts, the pique of Catholics, and the protests of scandalized bourgeois, we should now be able to begin to get ready to make up our minds about Joyce. And yet the reader of Magalaner and Kain can scarcely help being impressed by the number and magnitude of the problems which remain open. It is the peripheral questions which have been answered—the issue of Joyce's religion, for example, which is nicely clarified by the concept of the "Catholic atheist," or his relation to Ireland, which is patterned almost exactly on that of Ibsen to Norway; or the esthetic philosophy, or the interior monologue, or the sources and systems of the imagery. But the problem of seeing *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake* as novels remains as large as ever. The things Joyce imported into the novel are comprehensible enough, in and of themselves; but what did they do to the art of fiction, by virtue of their presence in a narrative?

From the perspective of mid-century, it seems safe to say that Joyce's was an amazing personal achievement, but one which sealed off at least as many corridors of thought and feeling as it opened up. Along with many other influences, he helped to interiorize the modern novel; but the mythical structure as he used it has not caught on; and, generally speaking, his influence has remained diffuse and indirect. If on the one hand he slices the rough loaf of life more micrometrically thin than anyone but Proust, cuts across a wider swath than anyone since Zola, and involves his reader in a richer maze of entwined themes and symbols than any other novelist in history, none of these achievements has seemed to lead anywhere, since 1920, except into the dark, quiet pocket of *Finnegans Wake*. For all its gaiety and fantastic invention, this novel must inevitably appear more the victim of, than the answer to, the contemporary novelist's problem of communication.

Thus Joyce is, for the moment, a splendid and solitary landmark in the history of the English novel. Clearly, he did not destroy or end it as a literary form; just as clearly, he did not revitalize it in any major, distinctive way. He is, indeed, a faceted and diamond-like figure; not without major lines of cleavage, but, like Milton, a great, blind, comprehensive eccentric who built a personal philosophy, a personal style, and finally even a personal language to shelter himself against the storms of the age. His best perspectives are as long as Ibsen's, and as fully emancipated from either ready-made philosophies or the insidious demands of the convenient. And precisely because his synthesis is so personal and imperfect, a great deal of what we see depends on the angles from which we see it. Relatively unitary and single-minded figures, like Fielding, Dickens, Hugo, and Flaubert have more or less coherent existences of their own; divided writers like Swift, Ibsen, and Joyce must, almost necessarily, take on varied

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

coloring in accordance with the light by which they are observed. The questions are all open; the one thing sure about today's truth is that tomorrow it will be someone's falsehood. There is a place reserved in the hierarchy of letters for figures about whom the critics cannot quite make up their minds—sometimes it is a very high place indeed. Perhaps Joyce will occupy a niche with the other great indeterminates. But this is, and can only be, a guess. Who Joyce is to be depends on who his readers are to be; and this question almost imposes a sceptical answer.

For the moment, pedagogy has laid its cold finger on the *Portrait* and *Ulysses*; one can prophesy a continuation, for a while at least, of the esoteric approach, the misunderstood-genius myth, and the emphasis on verbal ornament for its own sake. But it is not beyond hope that we shall someday get proposals for a reading of *Ulysses*, as it were, "in modern dress." Such a reading will take into account the hard, external carapace of Joyce's form without pretending that it is organic or that the philosophy sustaining it is anything more than jerrybuilt; it will recognize, without apologizing for, affinities with Bergson, Maeterlinck, and even Austin Dobson; it will be willing to raise the question of when a narrative is overloaded or muffled by its cosmic implications. And, having made all these concessions, it may still find Joyce one of the masters by whom our age will be judged in the largest framework that the history of culture affords.

DANIEL AARON

Seven Novels[1]

NOT EVERY NOVEL examined here contains as much "succulent sensuality" as Nelson Algren's *A Walk on the Wild Side*, but none of them would have passed muster with William Dean Howells. Brothels figure studiedly in two of them and very profane love in the remainder. The sexual alliances formed in New Orleans, Belfast, London, Paris, a North African town, and an unnamed Latin-American city are usually joyless, and the people involved seem to be motivated by every conceivable drive except love. Most of the characters are skidding downward, some to rise again spiritually refreshed, others to die or to

[1] A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE, by *Nelson Algren*. Farrar, Straus and Cudahy. $4.50. NIGHT, by *Erico Verissimo*. Macmillan. $2.95. THE FLIGHT FROM THE ENCHANTER, by *Iris Murdoch*. Viking. $3.75. THE LONELY PASSION OF JUDITH HEARNE, by *Brian Moore*. Little, Brown. $3.50. THE FALL OF A SPARROW, by *Nigel Balchin*. Rinehart. $3.75. A CERTAIN SMILE, by *Françoise Sagan*. E. P. Dutton. $2.95. THE UNFAITHFUL WIFE, by *Jules Roy*. Alfred A. Knopf. $1.25.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

languish, but all of them are put through some bizarre paces before they are doomed or saved. During their ordeals, only a few manage to break away from the apron strings of their over-solicitous creators, and the narratives they dominate are more often than not theological or psychological or philosophical tracts in which the fictive imagination is constantly being ambushed by ideas.

Nelson Algren's new novel is an astonishing performance and for readers of *Never Come Morning* or *The Man with the Golden Arm* a not entirely expected one. To be sure the pimps and whores and con men are here again, but a boozy lyricism has been added that suggests Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* or Saroyan in his coyest moments or even Damon Runyon.

Dove Linkhorn, Algren's amiable picaro, comes to New Orleans in the Great Depression to "start making his own way down the ladder of success" and reaches the bottom very quickly in the dives of Perdido Street. After trying such un-Horatio Algerish jobs as selling coffee pots to unemployed Negroes, manufacturing condoms, and performing for voyeurs in a whore house, Dove finds himself in jail with the kukes and winos and ginheads and queers—the denizens of the wild side of the street. Finally, in a brutal episode that Algren transposed from an earlier story in *The Neon Wilderness*, Dove is blinded and maimed by a legless ex-wrestler. His character has not developed an iota during these horrendous happenings; he remains the invincibly innocent folk-simpleton, a composite modern equivalent of Davy Crockett and Johnny Appleseed. But he dutifully echoes the message that Algren has pronounced and dramatized and symbolized throughout the book: that the fallen people, the "poor bummies, poor tarts" and other derelicts of the world are the "salt of the earth," and the "Do-Right Daddies" (respectable hypocrites) who can only rise by stepping upon the necks of others aren't fit to wash the feet of a Storyville hustler. "There's no trick in not going down the drain," one of his genuine criminals observes, "if you don't live in the sink. But you take a woman who makes her living where the water is sucking the weaker bugs down and she don't go down, she's twice the woman that one who never had to fight for her soul is."

In his celebration of whoredom and the down-and-outers, Algren sometimes lapses into a fruity prose, intended, perhaps, to poeticize his grimy cast. ("Under wire on either side other dime-a-nighties slept out their ten-cent dreams. Till the hundred harps of morning struck on strings of silvered light . . . Outside the drunks were coming out of the country's last speak easies and the street lamps began to move like the breasts of a young girl under the hands of a man who has bought too many.") He is fond of Whitmanesque catalogues, listing his prostitutes as if they were rivers and mountains of These United States. The skid-row procession rolls pleasingly from his pen—the wingies, dingies, zanies, kukes, cokies, pencil-peddlers, lushes, creepers,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kleptoes, pimps, and shils. It is as if Algren had translated one of the "bottom dog" proletarian novels, common in the thirties, into dithyrambs, keeping its heavily ironic reflections on a decaying capitalism but informing it with a post-depression optimism. What keeps *A Walk on the Wild Side* from being a curious anachronism comparable, for example, to Nathanael West's *A Cool Million*, are its touches of robust comedy and a few remarkable episodes and portraits. If Algren strains for effects and if his wisdom is embarrassing, he can report with gratifying exactness and comes closer to blending the real and the fabulous than most of his contemporaries.

Night by the Brazilian writer, Erico Verissimo, is also a walk on the wild side with a scene that oddly enough duplicates one of Algren's, but in addition *Night* is symbolical and psychological and Dostoievskian. A man darkly alluded to as the Stranger wanders alone through a great city. He is dirty and constantly thirsty. He has lost his memory, suspects he has committed a crime, and worries about the cash-filled wallet he carries in his pocket. The Stranger finds himself in a low cafe. He is picked up by a sadistic hunchback ("more like some kind of animal than a human being") who introduces him to a satanic figure known as the Master. The Master has yellow canine teeth, a slight moustache, and quotes Scripture fluently. Alternately fascinated and horrified by these ministers of evil, the Stranger goes with them on a tour of wickedness—to a carnival, a wake, a receiving hospital, a night club, and a brothel. Throughout this *walpurgisnacht*, the Stranger is followed by an angelic simpleton dressed in white and blowing a mouth organ, towards whom he feels a spiritual kinship. Amidst "the repulsive faces of the prostitutes and their males," half-drunk and uttering "guffaws and ejaculations," and surrounded by people "dead and pickled, floating in acid air, softening, rotting, in an inexorable dissolution," the Christ-like man seems like "a limpid cube of ice dropped by some miracle into that cauldron of hot water."

When the Stranger awakens the next morning in the arms of a Strange woman, he recalls his identity. A series of flashbacks reveal him as a mama's boy who, having observed the primal act, came to believe that the father was his mother's murderer. This naturally explains the Stranger's subsequent revulsion from performing certain conjugal duties, the tiff with his suffering wife whom he quite unfairly called a bitch, her decision to leave him, and his temporary amnesia. When he returns to his house after this illumination, he finds that she, too, has come home.

The Flight from the Enchanter with its Shelleyan title and esoteric message offers no such tidy conclusions although written in a downright prose that cools like "a limpid cube of ice" after the throbbing periods of Verissimo. It is an easier book to read than to describe. A

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

number of people with amusing idiosyncrasies become involved directly or indirectly with a mysterious international millionaire, Mischa Fox. There is Annette, a lovely and precocious girl with the looks and temperament of a mermaid; a young editor of a moribund women's rights magazine; his sister, named after Rosa Luxemburg, who befriends a pair of violent Polish brothers and then becomes the mistress of each while their ancient witch-like mother lies inert and smouldering in the corner of the room; a scholar trying to decipher an unknown language; an eccentric lady, very rich, who wears corduroy trousers and drinks champagne; a fiendish henchman of Fox's named Calvin Blick who looks "like a mixture of Baudelaire and de Tocqueville," and others. They call upon each other inopportunely, embarrass each other, compromise each other, but they all move as if under a spell cast by the enchanter Fox, who seems to plan or at least to anticipate their preposterous behavior.

It is likely that this tale has an underlying argument for the happy few, but if so, it has been imposed arbitrarily and has not been woven into the texture of the action. Is it a kind of *Huis Clos* (the novel opens with a reference to the Minotaur in the *Inferno*) in which a group of bedeviled souls chase one another through an enchanted labyrinth? Even the Enchanter himself, it is hinted, is in bondage to a supernatural superior, a demon that dwells within him. Fortunately, this book can be enjoyed without penetrating its darker veils of meaning. The episodes are usually quite funny, despite and sometimes because of their savagery, and the humor is largely gained by Miss Murdoch's solemn and precise rendering of the ridiculous. Her characters have no souls, but they are brilliantly if artificially illuminated by her splendid style.

For all its undemonstrative realism, Mr. Brian Moore's incisively written story of a Belfast spinster's disintegration sounds a howl of tribulation more shocking than anything in Algren, Verissimo, or Murdoch. His heroine, Judith Hearne, is a genteel maiden lady in her forties, condemned to spend her remaining years in the hideous rooming-house environs of hideous Belfast. She listens to the perpetual "tiny crash of teacups," confronts bosomy landladies in flowered housecoats, and rides on buses up and down the drab streets. Miss Hearne, understandably enough, is a secret drinker whose Catholic conscience is sometimes battered by erotic dreams.

The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne tells of her last desperate flurry to escape. Her potential rescuer is her landlady's brother, a red-faced Donegal man recently returned after many years in the States. Miss Hearne has to sublimate his brag and bluster, his consummate commonness, and mistakenly interprets a business offer from him as an invitation to marriage. Without her realizing it, she has become a part of a dingy intrigue involving the landlady's Machia-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vellian son, the servant girl he sleeps with, and the uncle who forcibly takes his pleasure on the same girl. Miss Hearne's shock at discovering that the uncle has no intentions of marriage precipitates a lonely binge during which her despised fellow-roomers hear her drunken singing. Finding no consolation in the perfunctory ministrations of her priest and harrowed by the thought that God has not listened to her years of prayer, she blows her savings in one stupendous gesture of self-assertion before collapsing, drunk and weeping, on the altar of her unresponsive church. Such a story could easily melt away in mawkishness, but Moore himself remains dry-eyed through his recital and never allows his sympathy for Judith Hearne to mitigate her silliness and maddening gentility. No miracle, as one of his characters puts it, can save her from drinking herself crazy in a furnished room.

The Fall of a Sparrow deals with another "case," as pathetic in his way as Judith Hearne. Jason Pellew's rueful history is reported by the narrator, Henry Payne, in a long flashback that begins with Pellew standing in the prisoner's dock charged with misappropriating a friend's property, passing bad checks, and stealing a car. Why, Payne wonders, does "an otherwise honorable man . . . suddenly act like a criminal and a cad?" The reason is soon apparent to the reader if not to Payne. Browbeaten by an insane father, a retired general, and exhibiting all of the classic neurotic symptoms before he is ten, Jason by the time he goes up to Cambridge is a pathological liar and a latent homosexual with "a death wish the size of an elephant." He retains throughout the hectic pre-war years and during his career as a volunteer in the Spanish Republican Army, paratrooper, and secret agent parachuted into Italy, an agreeable insouciance and eccentricity, and he is tough and brave. But he has never grown up and is unable to establish a mature emotional relationship with anyone.

Mr. Balchin tells all of this (and a considerable amount of other violent incident) in a quiet pipe-smoking sort of way, but his novel seldom rises above the level of musing recollection. The first person point of view in this instance prevents the narrative from building up any tension, because Payne himself is too neutral and too insensitive a register. Episodes potentially dramatic like Jason's faltering love for a communist Jewess and his gruesome marriage to a rich mink-coated cannibal come to nothing; the background of politics and war against which the action plays is neither casual nor apposite; and the reader puts down Mr. Balchin's book as he would a psychiatric essay on incipient schizophrenia.

Françoise Sagan's narrator in *A Certain Smile,* unlike Mr. Balchin's, is almost preternaturally acute. She does not need to rely upon day-dreams to satisfy her erotic needs either, but after her painfully rapturous liaison with a married man, she too must look forward to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"interminable afternoons" in her boardinghouse room, to "fits of despair," and to casual affairs that she knows will "come to bad ends."

Dominique, studying law at the Sorbonne, obviously prefers Sartre and bebop to torts, and when her student-lover, Bertrand, introduces her to his attractive uncle Luc, Dominique drops the younger for the older man. An affair that begins rationally enough (both, they tell each other, are bored, animal, "spiritually akin"), ends disastrously for Dominique whose existentialist crust is dissolved by love. To her chagrin, she has experienced the "classical reaction," and she finally wins an inner peace only after a fierce struggle with her two ferocious enemies, "memory and imagination." The gospel of absurdity and despair fails as an anodyne even for the adult and the blasé.

Miss Sagan treats this archaic theme with her characteristic dryness and remains at once within and outside her self-analytical if not self-knowing heroine. The language is spare and taut, the tone candidly deadpan. She has fondness for apothegms that convey a tired wisdom only appropriate in the very young: "When one is young and on the threshold of life's long deception, rashness is all." "We always want someone we've treated badly to be gay. It's less upsetting." "It is always curious to see to what extent life ratifies romantic conventions." She observes with the hundred-eyed intelligence possessed by good social novelists so that her casual comments ("the cunning approval which middle-aged women so often bestow upon adolescent couples"), the description of Luc ready for a plunge into a pool ("gaunt, stooping, and white skinned . . . holding his towel in front of him, like an awkward adolescent boy") become fatefully meaningful in their contexts.

Curiously enough, the minor characters in *A Certain Smile* come to life in a few deft strokes, while Luc is little more than a young woman's daydream of the perfect lover; he is merely "handsome, and intelligent, and tired." Dominique is too preoccupied with her own feelings ever to examine him with the baleful detachment that she reserves for herself and her friends. But perhaps the author is consistent in making Luc only a part of Dominique's Paris, "my sharp-edged, hard-boiled, golden city," and properly subordinate to Dominique herself.

In contrast to this strict little demonstration in the algebra of love, Jules Roy's novel is distinctly a man's book, written without irony or cunning but with considerable skill. As a former airman and admirer of Saint-Exupéry, Roy belongs to the handful of writers whose element is the air and for whom the experience of flight amounts almost to religious ecstasy. For him, the realm of the air is like Melville's sea, fearful and lonely but also free from the muck and passion of earth.

Hélène Ferrer, the unfaithful wife, is unhappily married to an air-force pilot who has badly mismanaged his marital affairs on the ground but who is a miracle of dexterity and courage when at the controls of the patched-up wrecks his squadron is obliged to fly. His reported

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

crash, as the novel opens, and the efforts of Deputy-Commandant Dumard and Squadron-Leader Rousseau to communicate with this tomcatting wife are followed by recollections of the living that document the disintegration of comradeship in a fetid North African air-depôt. This begins with the arrival of Lieutenant Ferrer's opulent and carnal wife who responds to her husband's neglect by turning him into a master cuckold. She sins with gusto but not with delight, rising from her bed of pleasure with "the deceptive feeling of having gained one hour or one evening over boredom." Seemingly unaware of Hélène's infidelities and his betrayal by his fellow officers, he receives "every day the gift of the sky." Only on the eve of his death does he confess to Dumard (a figure clearly modeled after Saint-Exupéry) his dilemma: that he knows about his wife's lovers, one of whom is the savagely sensual Rousseau, and that he can't get along without her or his planes. Both are tyrants that will betray when neglected. Ferrer's crash into the sea thus becomes a suicidal act of vindication that at once tears Hélène from her ravenous lovers and restores the masculine community.

Although Mme Ferrer is the honey around which flyers swarm, the usurping intelligence is Dumard, who comes to acknowledge that earthly suffering is the penalty paid by airmen for the serenity of flight. A priestly man, tempted to renounce the world yet still in thrall to his appetites, he, too, has "sinned against friendship" by coveting a friend's wife and by listening unmoved to the ribald anecdotes of her whorishness. Now sorrow has illuminated and dignified her, and as Dumard returns to the base after notifying her of Ferrer's disappearance, he growls at the fallible planes tethered in the field and calls them "filthy bitches." But his words are not intended to insult. "They are a cry of love which delivered him."

VERNON YOUNG

"Kiss the Hand You Cannot Sever"

THE DESERT seems to impose itself on the prose of anyone who writes of it, inducing, at certain descriptive junctures, an obliquity of metaphor and cadence which is remarkably similar across lines of temperament, nationality and literary experience.

> Ruddy is that earth and the rocks whereof this water-castle is built. High and terrible it showed in the twilight in this desolation of the world. We are here at nearly 4200 feet. After marching above one hundred miles in forty-eight hours we were come to the water,—water-kegs teeming with worms.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> The midday wind, reverberated by the glowing hills is like the blast of a lime-kiln. All colour melts away with the canescence from above. The sky is a dead milk-white, and the mirror-like sea so reflects the tint that you can scarcely distinguish the line of the horizon. After noon the wind sleeps on the reeking shore; there is a deep stillness; the only sound heard is the melancholy flapping of the sail.
>
> By day the hot sun fermented us, and we were dizzied by the beating wind; at night we were stained by dew, and shamed into pettiness by the innumerable silences of stars. . . . At last sunset came. The plain shivered once, as the darkness, which for an hour had been gathering among the facing hills, flowed slowly out and drowned it.
>
> The knife edge that was a horizon a moment ago suddenly breaks up into a disturbed jigsaw puzzle. Shapes shift about haphazardly, expanding and contracting, until they are swallowed by a blinding flood. Slowly, elongated balloons rise from the ragged shore, swell to a maximum, each in turn then, pulled by an unseen force at both ends, they stretch and overlap to right and left and fade away in undulating streaks. Rubber statues come to life, their extremities inflated, awkward in undecisive gestures, bulging at all the wrong points: tottering fever images, monuments shaken by malaria. . . .

The first of these paragraphs was written by Doughty, the second by Burton; the third compromises discontinuous sentences from T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, and the final passage is from the book under review,[1] *Azalaï* (camel-caravan), by John Skolle, until yesterday a painter. That his descriptive prose stands up in the company of those illustrious desert travellers who preceded him is an impressive consequence of his adaptation to another medium—and to another tongue, for English is not native to him. If the passage quoted is exceptional, its quality is far from rare in his book, and while *Azalaï* is not a classic comparable to *Arabia Deserta* or the Lawrence magnum opus, it is only less important than Burton's *A Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah*, because the Arabian-Nights man is universally known and his journeys to Asia Minor were pioneer ones. *Azalaï* is a rewarding book, despite certain reservations one feels obliged to express. It fills in, sensuously, another blank space on the map—a 1500-mile stretch of desert between Taoudeni and Timbuctoo in the French Sudan, the rock-salt caravan route of the wild, veiled Touaregs—it is enthralling where it is not vexing, and it raises questions about the merits of The Uncomfortable Life, deliberately sought.

I know the author of *Azalaï*. I don't know the country (Allah forbid) but I know the man who tracked it and I knew him in a landscape sufficiently resembling North Africa—the American South-

[1] AZALAÏ, by *John Skolle*. Harper and Brothers. $4.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

west—to make his book doubly suggestive to me. A reviewer is customarily expected to remain aloof from any qualifying knowledge he may have of another writer's antecedents, and if I didn't believe my unfair advantage would add to the reader's relish for the book, I certainly wouldn't risk conveying extrinsic details of the author's biography. But this is a curious volume, in tone as well as in subject matter—even more curious if you know something of the man who rode the camel. If you read between the lines—and the temptation is slight, since the narrative leads you shortly into a country and a way of life so anomalous that you may easily forego other recognitions—you will be bound to conclude that, although vividly presented for the most part, this is a markedly *uninvolved* recital. The author is there, persistently, trying to persuade you of his enchantment by the desert (without scotching the least savory details) and of his admiration for the "nobility" and the "courtesy" of desert people, of the Touareg especially. Yet one's overwhelming final impression is of an experience in which fascination was never far from nausea, and of a tribal existence inconceivably spartan which the observer has alleged, in the face of his own emphatically stated revulsions, to be superior to ours in its frugal virtue. Like George Catlin, noticeably, who stepped voluntarily from Philadelphia into the American wilderness over a hundred years ago in order to paint Indians, the author of *Azalaï* has taken the hard way to demonstrate that social morality is as relative as anthropology insists. The demonstration in each case is less compelling than the art of the demonstrator. Catlin defended the idiosyncrasies of the Mandan Indians with endless rationalizing apostrophes to the Eighteenth Century conceptions of Nature. On this subject he is now all but unreadable, but his paintings have the charm of the fabulous. Skolle, the beneficiary of a hundred-years-worth of primitive idealization, simply asserts the catastrophic vices of Western technology, while shrugging off the inventive cruelty of Arabs and Berbers (by definition far from primitive). And like Catlin, in this direction, he sounds as if he were trying to convince himself. What he comes back with, beside a better prose style, is precisely what the earlier adventurer brought: data, and episodes of art.

Skolle was born in that ethnographically ambiguous composite known as Czechoslovakia, of German circus-performer parents. His early years were Bohemian, the youthful and early middle ones Parisian and Algerian, but I don't remember the duration of his residence in each place. During the Twenties he visited New York City, a feted artist. Respected, applauded and given commissions, he painted, among other things, decorations for the stall showers of tall American women in small pent-houses. The world was his dry martini. In the terrible Thirties he returned, a refugee from organized impositions of Nordic nobility, when refugees were a dime a dozen. "I'm sorry, there is no such number listed in the current directory"—and Skolle was forced

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to resume the more characteristic way of the artist in America. "You're a painter?! Yes—but what do you do for a living?" It's still a good question. I can tell you what Skolle did for a living. He's an expert horseman (I don't know where he picked up that accomplishment), which enabled him to procure a succession of hideous ranch jobs in Colorado and New Mexico (where we met), until, a few years ago, he backed off into the comparative refinement of teaching art in a girls' private school . . . I think Skolle has never got over the shock of his depreciated status between the two American visits; it has confirmed the melancholy which is as native to him, but more characteristic, as the high-keyed inventive wit of his happier moments.

The interludes of his life in the horse-breaking, dude-ranch-grooming Southwest were occupied, always under stress—his own as well as the world's—with painting magical fantasies in a highly personal style, superior to the work of all but a very few in the region during a decade of my familiarity with it. I remain baffled by his continuing obscurity. To generalize, his paintings are cool but forceful; their conception is fanciful, sometimes symbolic, always lucid in execution. Fifteen years ago they could have been classified surrealist; they expressed ideas: a wall with ears, skeletal ruins like an emptied carnival site, entitled *My Heritage*, or a rigorously drafted bird of prey (inspired by a plundering hawk in the Pecos country) with wires geometrically attaching it to its victims—all painted in flat, harshly cold planes of color with a species of poster paint on frail canvases, as if he had no thought for their durability. And this diffidence he retained as the painting became less directly personal, if no less eccentric. I recall a splendid sequence of stylized toreros and a sophisticated-Rousseau treatment of jungle themes—*Jungle 1, 2, 3*, etc. He has painted Touaregs also, which I've seen only in illustration, luminous and formalized but not abstract. It's a pity his publishers didn't demand sketches, at least, for his photographs are either badly printed or weren't very good to begin with—an understandable hazard of the geography. But Skolle was always loth to use art as information and in any case claims to have renounced painting.

Why does a man go to the deserts of Africa—or to any comparable outland? He'll usually give you the reason with which he has been deceiving himself. The now famous answer that men climb mountains because the mountains are there is still not an answer, and it's surely significant that before a hundred years ago professional mountain-climbing was virtually unheard of. (Spengler thinks he has the answer to that one.) Graham Greene was frank to admit that his journey to West Africa was a journey into the preconscious experience of the race. Paul Bowles tipped his hand when he dedicated a volume of short stories to his mother, who had read to him the tales of Edgar Allan Poe. And Lawrence's *Seven Pillars* is confessional from beginning to end. ("Some of the evil of my tale may have been inherent in our

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

circumstances." *Some* of the evil.) I believe that a man who goes on a remote journey goes to meet what he has always lived with. Skolle has always lived in a desert, one of shifting dunes inhabited by nomads. If there were no such thing as a mirage (and is there?) it would have been necessary, and quite simple, for Skolle to have invented it. He has had a hectic and materially unrewarded life, usually within sight and sound of the century's principal emblems of horror. But one is forced to admit that he was born to the sense of fantasy, as the sparks fly upward. The sense makes him miserable in a pragmatic world while it also rescues him from stultification. In his middle fifties he is off to Africa again, and possibly Pakistan. Querulous and unrelated, he is yet venturesome. The esthetic of the absurd cancels his tragic sense—which is why he'll never paint us as definitive a view of desolation as we've had from Yves Tanguy, whose itinerary was strangely parallel to Skolle's: two mutations in his art were impelled by North Africa and Arizona, respectively.

At one point of a historical résumé in *Azalaï*, Skolle recounts a ghastly aftermath to desert hostilities: a seriously wounded survivor, who begged for the mercy of a quick death, was wrapped in the skin of a freshly killed camel and abandoned to the double agony of his head wounds and the shrinking skin. The tribal identity of the offenders is unimportant; their behaviour is exemplary for the desert nomad's world. When I read Skolle's farewell toast—"I made no startling discoveries or profitable gains. . . . I had shared the hardships of the desert men and found shelter in their frail tents. I had come as a stranger. I left as a friend, deeply impressed by their dignity and their courageous way of life."—when I read this, I gaped. At least seven times Skolle has left New Mexico forever, *enraged*—usually because the local Spanish have stolen the side windshields of his car, or some such thing. But the pranks of Bedouins elicit his flair for the polite understatement. An aphorism from the Touareg may well be the explanation of this partiality for the ultimate annoyance: "Kiss the hand you cannot sever."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILLIAM MEREDITH

"How but in Custom and in Ceremony?"[1]

IMMODERATE ENTHUSIASMS FOR the foreign are often based on a misunderstanding: our Chinese Chippendale, Turkish corners, and Japanese gardens were not unlike the ceremonial use to which the flush-toilet is said to have been put by a primitive tribe. An old fashioned socialist might feel obliged to point out, in this connection, that European voyages from the beginning have partaken of the nature of shopping trips. Faced with the civilized composure of Asia, we have been rattled into what might be called the lamp-base approach to travel: will it go in the living-room back home?

Our serious study of the Orient in recent years, although still vastly disproportionate to the study of our parent culture, has gradually discarded this provincialism. It has brought us more and more to grips with the profound differences of attitude and value which separate us from Asian peoples. The language barrier is itself more complete than among western languages or between the west and other less literary cultures. The philosophical and psychological barriers are less distinct but presumably as hermetic.

The theater and the dance (like music, with which they are always allied in the Orient) transcend certain of the barriers between civilizations and thus tempt us to forget or deny those that remain. The artists and entrepreneurs who bring oriental entertainments to the west often encourage us, for good reasons or bad, in this error; their fare has been edited, like the Businessman's Lunch in a chinatown restaurant. But if we are serious in our interest in these arts, we must penetrate the false or contrived resemblances. *Quaint* and *exotic* are adjectives which belie a serious appreciation. The two books under review share a virtue which is still rare in popular works on the Orient: they address themselves primarily to the unfamiliar elements of the arts concerned.

Western theater and dance today show many signs of fatigue. The excitement occasioned lately by visiting oriental dancers and by the Kabuki theater (as seen by Americans in Japan, rather than in the edited if splendid fare of the Azuma company in this country), must be in part a reflection of our own need for new forms. Whether or not this was any part of their purpose, these books are a warning against naive borrowings. These arts do not emerge as quaint or exotic, nor do they invite unskilled imitation.

[1] THE KABUKI THEATRE, by *Earle Ernst*. Oxford University Press. $7.50. THEATRE IN THE EAST, by *Faubion Bowers*. Thomas Nelson & Sons. $7.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In his introduction, Earle Ernst modestly calls his work an "outline" of the Kabuki theater "as an expression of Japanese life and culture." More than this, it is the first complete examination in our language of a theater which many Americans, including the reviewer, consider the most vigorous now alive. (Prior to *The Kabuki Theatre*, the best extended discussion on the subject was probably that by the other author under review, Faubion Bowers, in his *The Japanese Theatre*.)

In a history of a little more than three centuries, the Kabuki has evolved from its origins in the Noh play and in popular and religious dance, to a position that has no close equivalent in the west. Two contemporary European phenomena are sometimes compared to it, as being similarly archaic, stylized, and of broad national appeal: Italian opera and the Comédie Française. In the respects mentioned, the comparisons are valid; but certain major cultural differences, with which Mr. Ernst deals in detail, invalidate them in other respects. The unity of Japanese culture, for example, is such that our concept of classical vs. popular hardly exists in Japan. And where in the west we have often confused art with reality—have used art as the medium for some of our most searching examinations of reality—the compartmental thought of the Japanese allows no such confusion. Mr. Ernst tells us that they had no word for *aesthetics* until 1880, when western contacts had suggested this problem, one which our vocabulary has still not solved. The very notions of the archaic, the stylized, the national, involved in our comparisons above, must be modified, we see, in the light of Japan's monolithic culture which this theater reflects so particularly.

Mr. Ernst's method is to show how one after another of the unique features of the civilization are projected into the specifications of the theater. Japanese living habits—eating, sleeping, sitting—establish a peculiar relationship to the floor which is embodied in the actor's movements and accommodated by the architecture of the stage. Japanese art is suggestive rather than representational, and "the actor's gesture does not reproduce reality [but] is a rhythmic and designed ordering of the gesture observed." Japanese philosophy yields what we would call pathos more often than tragedy; "at the base of Japanese artistic thought lies the Buddhist concept that all things pass, that glory is evanescent, that all bright quick things come to confusion, and this notion constitutes almost the whole intellectual content of Japanese art"; and thus "the basic and continuous ground of the [Kabuki] performance is that of unresolved sadness."

That all this is very foreign to our concept of theater, Mr. Ernst leaves no doubt. Yet better than many of the rhapsodists who have described Kabuki he succeeds in establishing a sense of its special vigor and magic. The average reader would forego some of the rather repetitious emphasis on theatrical techniques and their contrasts with the western, and would welcome fuller description of the standard reper-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tory. (In this single respect, Mr. Bowers' book remains the more useful.) Better still, Mr. Ernst, whose direction of several Kabuki plays in English (at the University of Hawaii) has been spectacularly successful, should be commissioned to film a Kabuki performance with an English commentary. He demonstrates in this book a most articulate command of the subject.

Faubion Bowers' *Theatre in the East* is an ambitious survey of all dance and drama in Asia. Mr. Bowers writes as an enthusiastic reporter and his material is spectacular. In the course of his investigation of the two arts and the music that accompanies them, he provides considerable cultural history and an alert report on recent political and social events in Asia. Perhaps because music and the dance are more readily translated than drama, the author records more that is familiar in his travels than Earle Ernst reports in his specialized study of Kabuki. But what is familiar is more often the non-artistic human responses than the arbitrary (for conventions are always arbitrary) artistic conventions. There is no glib or willful understanding in the author's approach. For this reason, though his account is sometimes puzzling, it always has the ring of truth. It is not easy to describe music and dance, or unfamiliar theatrical practice. Mr. Bowers has an observant eye, and time and again, if the reader is faithful, a detailed description will accomplish sharp visual and auditory images of some hitherto unimagined art form. Mr. Bowers' style, alas, remains that of a hurried reporter, as it was in *The Japanese Theatre*. Generally, the verbal confusion seems to be simply that of a rough first draft. But occasionally we are forced to say of his grasp of vocabulary (as he says of India's art): "what remains is to a large extent scarcely more than vestigial." But as was said in these pages four years ago of *The Japanese Theatre*, this is probably the best book in its field.

To come to an appreciation of the temporal arts of Asia, the westerner needs more than anything else to know how these arts are viewed in their own environments. Mr. Ernst and Mr. Bowers have shed great light on this aspect of their subjects. If the reader were to try to formulate a basic distinction between east and west in the *use* of theater, dance and music, he might arrive at this: in Asia, these arts are ceremonies, whereas in the west they are quests or enquiries. One of our best mystics, Yeats, enquired:

> *How but in custom and in ceremony*
> *Are innocence and beauty born?*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMUNICATIONS

Dears Sirs:

The U.S. Information Agency is seeking candidates for overseas posts as Cultural Affairs Officers, Information Officers, and Bi-national Center Officers. Only those with a record of achievement in public affairs, cultural affairs, including artistic and scholarly work, English-language teaching, or some medium of communication should apply. Age limits 31 to 55. Salary range $5700 to $10,700, plus allowances. Candidates must be willing to serve anywhere in the world. Send for application forms and further information to Argus Tresidder, Cultural Affairs Advisor, Room 652 Walker-Johnson Building, U.S. Information Agency, Washington 25, D.C.

ARGUS TRESIDDER

Washington

Dear Sirs:

From January 2, to February 15, 1957, The Corporation of Yaddo will consider applications from those interested in spring, summer or fall residence. Inquiries from serious and responsible workers in the fields of writing, musical composition, painting and the other arts should be addressed to Mrs. Elizabeth Ames, Executive Director of Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, New York.

After studying the work of those who wish residence, those who are chosen by the committees on admission are invited for a period of two months. While in residence, guests have no living expenses. Yaddo receives guests throughout the year, though from October 1st to June 1st on a more restricted schedule than during the four summer months.

Board of Directors,
The Corporation of Yaddo

Saratoga Springs

Dear Sirs:

Friends of the late Isaac Rosenfeld are trying to collect enough money to ensure the higher education of his children. Those who knew him or were taught by him or read his work are asked to send what they can in a check made out to Russell M. Cooper, Treasurer, and mailed to Dean Russell M. Cooper, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis 14, Minnesota.

We shall be grateful for your help in bringing this request to your readers.

SAUL BELLOW, RUSSELL M. COOPER,
RALPH G. ROSS, ALLEN TATE
(Committee for the Isaac Rosenfeld Fund)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AUTHORS

Aaron, Daniel: Seven Novels (review) 622
Adams, Robert Martin: High Critics and Low (review) 310
Joyce and His Critics (review) 617
Alfred, William: The Double (verse) 569
Arrowsmith, William: Nine New Poets (review) 289
News from Mojave (review) 474
Becker, William: Some French Plays in Translation (review) 277
Bewley, Marius: Polynesia and Manhattan in Melville's Art (review) 609
Blackmur, R. P.: The Great Grasp of Unreason 488
Brandeis, Irma: Dante's Canzone I (translation) 567
Burke, Kenneth: Symbol and Association 212
Butler, Frank: To the Wilderness I Wander (story) 86
Clay, Richard: Maria Gardner (story) 541
Creekmore, Hubert: Translations from Provençal 199
Dimock, G. E. Jr.: The Name of Odysseus 52
Eastlake, William: The Unhappy Hunting Grounds (story) 399
Eberhart, Richard: The Kite (verse) 165
Elliott, George P.: Four Poems 504
Fainlight, Ruth: Two Poems 568
Frye, Northrop: Graves, Gods and Scholars (review) 298
Gold, Herbert: Marcel, on se fout toi! (review) 315
The New Upper-Middle Soap Opera 585
Goodreau, William: Father Sebastien Rale, S.J. (verse) 534
Gullans, Charles: Three Poems 416
Hecht, Anthony: Poetry Chronicle (review) 444
Holland, Norman N.: The Laughter of Laurence Sterne 422
Hollander, John: Two Poems 49
Holloway, John: The Well-Filled Dish: An Analysis of Swift's Satire 20
The Life and Adventures of Heroic Mr. Clubman (verse) 244
New Lines in English Poetry 592
Jumper, Will C.: Whom Seek Ye? A Note on Robert Lowell's Poetry 117
Kenner, Hugh: Under the Larches of Paradise (review) 457
Kerman, Joseph: Orpheus and the Neoclassic Vision of Opera 250
Krim, Seymour: Whitman and His Critics (review) 134
Lattimore, Richmond: Two Poems 38
Logan, John: John Gruen's Settings for Wallace Stevens 273
Meredith, William: Metropolitan Opera Chronicle 268
"How But in Custom and in Ceremony" (review) 633
Merwin, W. S.: Poems and Translations 509
Middleton, Christopher: The Flight into Egypt (verse) 487
Miner, Earl: Pound, *Haiku* and the Image 570
Moss, Howard: Letter to an Imaginary Brazil (verse) 419

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mudrick, Marvin: The Broken Image of Magnanimity (review) .. 126
Norse, Harold: Translation from G. G. Belli 71
Parker, Douglass: Ovid Returned (review) 466
Hwaet, We Holbytla . . . (review) 598
Pound, Ezra: Canto 96 7
Canto 97 387
Reeve, F. D.: Two Poems 420
Reid, B. L.: Justice to *Pamela* 516
Rudikoff, Sonya: Theories, and Art Itself (review) 147
Feminism Reconsidered 178
Sarton, May: Two Poems 44
Sawyer, Kenneth B.: The Century Plant: A Dialogue on Current Painting 431
Simpson, Louis: Fiction Chronicle (review) 302
Singer, Irving: Literary Truth (review) 141
The Language of Aesthetics 226
Tomlinson, Charles: Four Poems 513
Watkins, Vernon: Ode at the Spring Equinox (verse) 46
Williams, William Carlos: Three Poems 485
Winters, Yvor: Problems for the Modern Critic of Literature 325
Young, Vernon: La Strada: Cinematic Intersections 437
"Kiss the Hand You Cannot Sever" (review) 628

BOOKS REVIEWED

Aesthetics and Criticism, by Harold Osborne: *Irving Singer* 141
The American Adam, by R. W. B. Lewis: *Robert Martin Adams* .. 310
An American Takes A Walk, by Reed Whittemore: *Anthony Hecht* 444
An Anatomy of Milton's Verse, by W. B. C. Watkins: *Marvin Mudrick* 126
Art and Visual Perception, by Rudolf Arnheim: *Sonya Rudikoff* 149
As If, by John Ciardi: *Anthony Hecht* 444
Azalaï, by John Skolle: *Vernon Young* 628
Birthdays from the Ocean, by Isabella Gardner: *William Arrowsmith* 289
Brides of Reason, by Donald Davie: *John Holloway* 592
The Capri Letters, by Mario Soldati: *William Arrowsmith* 474
A Certain Smile, by Françoise Sagan: *Daniel Aaron* 622
Collected Poems 1955, by Robert Graves: *Northrop Frye* 298
Creation and Discovery, by Eliseo Vivas: *Irving Singer* 141
The Cross of Iron, by Willi Heinrich: *Louis Simpson* 302
The Cycle of American Literature, by R. E. Spiller: *Robert Martin Adams* 310
The Deaths at Paragon, Indiana, by John Woods: *William Arrowsmith* 289
Delta Return, by Charles Bell: *Anthony Hecht* 444
Dublin's Joyce, by Hugh Kenner: *Robert Martin Adams* 617
Exiles and Marriages, by Donald Hall: *William Arrowsmith* 289

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fables and Ceremonies, by Winthrop Palmer: *Anthony Hecht* 444
The Fall of a Sparrow, by Nigel Balchin: *Daniel Aaron* 622
The Flight from the Enchanter, by Iris Murdoch: *Daniel Aaron* .. 622
Friday's Child, by Wilfred Watson: *William Arrowsmith* 289
Ikon: John Milton and the Modern Critics, by Robert Martin Adams: *Marvin Mudrick* 126
In The Winter of Cities, by Tennessee Williams: *Anthony Hecht* 444
Ishmael, by James Baird: *Marius Bewley* 609
Jean Santeuil, by Marcel Proust: *Herbert Gold* 315
Journey to Love, by William Carlos Williams: *Anthony Hecht* .. 444
Joyce: The Man, The Work, The Reputation, by Marvin Magalaner and Richard M. Kain: *Robert Martin Adams* 617
The Kabuki Theatre, by Earle Ernst: *William Meredith* 633
Keep the Aspidistra Flying, by George Orwell: *Louis Simpson* 302
The Lark, trans. by Christopher Fry: *William Becker* 277
The Lark, adapted by Lillian Hellman: *William Becker* 277
Leaves of Grass, One Hundred Years After, ed. by Milton Hindus: *Seymour Krim* 134
The Less Deceived, by Philip Larkin: *John Holloway* 592
A Letter from Li Po and Other Poems, by Conrad Aiken: *Anthony Hecht* 444
Lolita, by Vladimir Nabokov: *Louis Simpson* 302
The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne, by Brian Moore: *Daniel Aaron* 622
The Lord of the Rings, by J. R. R. Tolkien: *Douglass Parker* 598
The Malefactors, by Caroline Gordon: *Louis Simpson* 302
The Man Who Was Not With It, by Herbert Gold: *William Arrowsmith* 474
The Metamorphoses of Ovid, trans. by Mary M. Innes: *Douglass Parker* 466
The Metamorphoses of Ovid, Eng. version by A. E. Watts: *Douglass Parker* 466
Milton and the Angels, by Robert H. West: *Marvin Mudrick* 126
The Misanthrope, trans. by Richard Wilbur: *William Becker* 277
The Moral Circus, by Edwin Honig: *William Arrowsmith* 289
Night, by Erico Verissimo: *Daniel Aaron* 622
One Foot in Eden, by Edwin Muir: *Anthony Hecht* 444
Ovid: Metamorphoses, trans. by Rolfe Humphries: *Douglass Parker* 466
A Perfect Woman, by L. P. Hartley: *William Arrowsmith* 474
Poems, by Robert Conquest: *John Holloway* 592
Poems: North & South—A Cold Spring, by Elizabeth Bishop: *Anthony Hecht* 444
Poets of Today II, by Norma Farber, Robert Pack and Louis Simpson: *William Arrowsmith* 289
Prefabrications, by Josephine Miles: *Anthony Hecht* 444
The Raven and The Whale, by Perry Miller: *Marius Bewley* 609
Section: Rock Drill, by Ezra Pound: *Hugh Kenner* 457
Selected Poems, by Adam Mickiewicz: *Anthony Hecht* 444

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Solitary Singer, by Gay Wilson Allen: *Seymour Krim* 134
Some Trees, by John Ashbery: *William Arrowsmith* 289
The Source and Other Poems, by Katherine Watson: *Anthony Hecht* 444
That Uncertain Feeling, by Kingsley Amis: *Louis Simpson* 302
Theatre in the East, by Faubion Bowers: *William Meredith* 633
Things of This World, by Richard Wilbur: *Anthony Hecht* 444
Tiger at the Gates, trans. by Christopher Fry: *William Becker* 277
Time in Literature, by Hans Meyerhoff: *Irving Singer* 141
The Unfaithful Wife, by Jules Roy: *Daniel Aaron* 622
Villa Narcisse, by Katherine Hoskins: *Anthony Hecht* 444
A Walk on the Wild Side, by Nelson Algren: *Daniel Aaron* 622
Walt Whitman's Concept of the American Common Man, by Leadie M. Clark: *Seymour Krim* 134
Walt Whitman Reconsidered, by Richard Chase: *Seymour Krim* .. 134
Winter in the Air, by Sylvia Townsend Warner: *William Arrowsmith* 474
A World of Saints, by Thomas Cole: *Anthony Hecht* 444

STATEMENT REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946 (TITLE 39, UNITED STATES CODE, SECTION 233)
SHOWING THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION OF
THE HUDSON REVIEW published quarterly at New York, N.Y. for October 1, 1956.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th St., New York 22, N.Y.; Editors, William Arrowsmith, Joseph Bennett and Frederick Morgan; managing editor, Lisa Dyer, all same address.

2. The owner is: The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th St., New York 22, New York, a New York membership corporation not authorized to issue stock, whose members are: Joseph Bennett, David DuVivier and Frederick Morgan, all same address.

3. The known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. Paragraphs 2 and 3 include, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting; also the statements in the two paragraphs show the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner.

LISA DYER, Managing Editor

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 10th day of October, 1956.

VIOLA M. FAY
Notary Public
(My commission expires March 30, 1957.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED